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EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES

ON THE

FIRST EPISTLE OF THE APOSTLE PETER.

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ΕΙΠΕ ΔΕ 'Ο ΚΥΡΙΟΣ ΣΙΜΩΝ, ΣΙΜΩΝ . . . ΣΤ ΠΟΤΕ ΕΠΙΣΤΡΕΨΑΣ
ΣΤΗΡΙΞΟΝ ΤΟΤΣ ΑΔΕΛΦΟΤΣ ΣΟΤ.—ΛΟΥΚ. ΚΒ' λ α' λ β'.

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EXPOSITORY DISCOURSES.

DISCOURSE XI.

THE CONDITION AND DUTY OF CHRISTIANS “AS FREE,”
YET “AS THE SERVANTS OF GOD.”

“As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.”¹—1 PET. ii. 16.



THESE words contain in them a very instructive view of the condition and duty of Christians, to the illustration and improvement of which I design to devote the following discourse. The CONDITION of Christians is described as at once a condition of liberty and subjection. They are “free,” and yet servants, “the servants of God.” The DUTY of Christians is stated with a reference to their condition: they are to conduct themselves agreeably to their condition, as free, and as the servants of God; they are to assert and use their liberty; they are not to abuse their liberty; they are to exemplify or act out their subjection. Such is the outline which I will attempt to fill up in the sequel.

I. THE CONDITION OF CHRISTIANS.

§ 1. *They are free.*

Let us then, in the first place, attend to the account contained in the text of the condition of Christians. They are

¹ See note A.

“free,” yet “the servants of God.” Christians are a peculiar people. They are freemen among slaves, the servants of God among the servants of the wicked one. This was not always the case. The common condition of the race was originally theirs. They were slaves both in condition and in character, and they were rebels. But “the Son has made them free, and they are free indeed;” and the determined rebel has become a loyal subject. “If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature,” and to him there is a new creation. “Old things have passed away, and all things have become new.” Christians are free: free in reference to God; free in reference to man; free in reference to the powers and principles of evil.

Let us shortly attend to these various aspects of the Christian’s freedom.

(1.) *Free in reference to God.*

First, Christians are free in reference to God. They are “the Lord’s freemen.”¹ By this we do not mean that they are not under the strongest obligations to conform their minds and wills to the mind and will of God, and to regulate the whole of their temper and conduct according to the revelation of that mind and will contained in his word. They are not free in the sense of being “without law to God;” to be so would be the reverse of a privilege; they “are under the law to Christ.”² Yet still in a very important sense they are free, both as to condition and character, in reference to God; and these two forms or species of freedom are closely connected, the latter being the result and manifestation of the former.

The relation in which the Christian, before conversion, stood to God in consequence of sin, was that of a condemned criminal; and the character by which he was dis-

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 22.

² 1 Cor. ix. 21.

tinguished was that of a sullen slave, conscious of having exposed himself to punishment for his indolence and unfaithfulness, and equally hating his Master and his work. "All have sinned, all have lost the approbation of God,"¹ all have incurred the condemning sentence of the divine law; and

"Chains are the portion of revolted man—
Stripes and a dungeon."²

They are, as it were, shut up in prison, reserved for punishment, and bound by the fetters of guilt, which no created power can break, no created ingenuity unlock.

In this state, of which no sinner is entirely unconscious, the disposition cherished by him towards God is, must be, not that of an affectionate child or a loyal subject, but that of a slave punished for disobedience, bearing a grudge towards his master, as if the unreasonableness of the task assigned him, rather than his own wilful neglect and disobedience, were the true cause of the evils he feels or fears. He is an entire stranger to the love of God, so that free voluntary obedience is a moral impossibility; and if at any time he assume the appearance of submission, and do those actions which the law requires, such conduct springs entirely from the principles of servile fear or mercenary expectation. This is the natural condition and character of all men in reference to God. This was once the condition and character of every Christian.

But the condemned criminal has become a pardoned, accepted child; the slave has obtained both the state and the disposition of a freeman. The prison doors have been thrown open, the fetters of guilt have been unloosed, the prisoner has gone forth. Love has taken the place of dislike, confidence of jealousy, joyful hope of "the fear that

¹ Rom. iii. 23. *Δόξα*.—John v. 41-44.

² Cowper.

had torment ;” and while the pardoned, renewed sinner, “ keeps God’s precepts,” “ he walks at liberty.”

The manner in which this change is produced must be familiar to the mind of every one who properly understands even “ the principles of the doctrines of Christ,” “ the first principles of the oracles of God.”¹ It is by the faith of the truth as it is in Jesus, that man, the criminal and slave, is introduced into the state and formed to the character of a spiritual freeman. Christ Jesus, the only-begotten of God, moved by sovereign love, has, by the appointment of his Father, done and suffered, as the substitute of man, all that was necessary to make the salvation of sinners perfectly consistent with, gloriously illustrative of, the holiness and justice as well as the pity and benignity of the divine character. That wondrous work of “ God manifest in the flesh” is made the subject of a plain, well-accredited revelation. In the case of all the saved by a sovereign divine influence, the mind is so fixed on this revelation, in its meaning and evidence, as to understand and believe it. This is the faith of the gospel.

This faith, by divine appointment, brings the sinner within the saving power of the atonement. He is redeemed from the curse of the law through him who became a curse in his stead ; the blessing of Abraham, even a free and full justification, by believing, comes on him ; and he obtains larger and larger measures of the promised Spirit, by believing. “ Being justified by faith, he has peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and has access to God,” as his father and friend, “ by this faith, in reference to the grace of God ;” and he “ stands” in this state of reconciliation and favourable fellowship, “ rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.” “ There is no more condemnation to him, being in Christ Jesus ; and he walks no more after

¹ Heb. vi. 1, v. 12.

the flesh, but after the Spirit." The Spirit of Christ the Lord dwells in him; and "where the Spirit of the Lord," which is a free spirit, "is, there is liberty." The love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given to him, and he loves him who has first, and so, loved him. And his love finds its natural expression in conformity to God's mind and will, and in obedience to his commandments. It is no longer the slave, toiling at intervals at a task which he abhors, to secure the morsel or to escape the lash: it is an enlightened, renewed creature, embracing what he sees to be true, and doing what he knows to be right, following out the impulses of his new nature; and doing all this the more readily, because he knows that, in doing so, he walks in the light of his heavenly Father's countenance, enjoying an elevating consciousness of fellowship of mind and heart with the only wise, the immaculately holy, the infinitely benignant, the ever-blessed God; and because he has learned, by painful experience, that "the way of the transgressor," even of "the backslider in heart," "is hard," and that holiness and happiness are, in the nature of things, as well as by the express divine appointment, so closely conjoined, as to be all but identified with each other. He "knows the truth, and the truth makes him free."¹

The whole of the Christian's obedience, when he acts like himself, has this character of true-hearted freedom. With regard to a very large portion of his duties, he so distinctly sees their reasonableness and excellence, and the important and blissful purposes which obedience is fitted to secure, that he considers the having this peaceful, joyful path, through a world full of sin and misery, so clearly pointed out in the law of the Lord, as one of the greatest proofs of the kindness of his God and Father. He sees and feels that God has "granted him his law graciously."

¹ Rom. v. 1, 2, viii. 1; 2 Cor. iii. 17.

The language of his heart is, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day;" "Great peace have they who love thy law, nothing can offend them;" "I will run in the way of thy commandments, when thou hast enlarged my heart;" "I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I love:" "so shall I keep thy laws continually for ever and ever, and I will walk at liberty; for I seek thy precepts."¹ And if, in some cases, he may feel a difficulty in perceiving the reason of a particular piece of dutiful exertion, or suffering, or sacrifice, required of him, the deep-seated conviction of the infinite wisdom and power of Jehovah, constantly influenced by holy love, which the manifestation of God, in the person and work of his Son, has lodged in his mind, makes him cheerfully comply with the requisition, just because it is His.

The measure of this spiritual liberty obviously depends on the measure of faith. In proportion to the clearness of our apprehensions, and the firmness of our persuasion of "the truth as it is in Jesus," will be the alacrity and delight with which, "delivered out of the hands of our" spiritual "enemies, we serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness."² The spirit of bondage, which leads Christians again to fear, with the fear which hath torment, which fetters their minds and hearts, grows powerful just as saving truth is overlooked or misapprehended; and can be cast out of the heart only by that "perfect love," which grows out of our knowing and believing the love which God has for us, and which he has manifested in giving his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

The character of manly, Christian, affectionate freedom, which the knowledge and faith of the truth as it is in Jesus, under divine influence, produces, renders unnecessary and unsuitable such an institution as the Mosaic law, an institu-

¹ Ps. cxix. 97, 165, 32, 16, 47, 44, 45.

² Luke i. 74.

tion adapted to the Church in its infant state. That institution, having served its purpose, has been abrogated ; and all attempts—and they have been numerous—to introduce into the Christian Church any system of a similar character, are foolish and criminal,—an invasion equally of the prerogative of Christ, and of the privileges of his people. So much for the Christian's freedom in reference to God.

(2.) *Free in reference to man.*

Let us now look at the second aspect of the Christian's freedom : He is free in reference to man.

When we say that the Christian is free in reference to man, we do not mean to say that he is not under obligation to seek the happiness of his fellow-men, and especially of his fellow-Christians ; or to deny that, in prosecuting this end, he is to imitate the conduct of his Lord, who “ came not to be ministered to, but to minister.” Christians are “ to submit themselves one to another, in the fear of God ;” they are all of them to be “ subject one to another,” and “ by love to serve one another.” The apostle's being “ free from all men,” was not at all inconsistent with his being “ the servant of all.” “ He who would be chief among his brethren, must be the servant of all.” “ He that is greatest among you,” says our Lord, “ shall be your servant.”¹

Nor do we mean to say that the Christian is emancipated from civil authority, and is not bound to “ be subject to the powers that be,” or that he cannot fill the place of a domestic servant, and discharge its duties. His relations and duties, as a member of civil or domestic society, are in no degree changed by his becoming a Christian.

Nor do we mean to say that the Christian may not be subjected to the most degrading servitude, being treated by

¹ Eph. v. 21 ; 1 Pet. v. 5 ; Gal. v. 13 ; Matt. xx. 28 ; 1 Cor. ix. 19 ; Luke xxii. 26.

a fellow-man as if he were as completely his property as his estate or his cattle. This has actually been the situation of multitudes of Christians. It is the situation of not a few at this moment; and oh, shame! the slaveholder, as well as the slave, bears the worthy name, Christian.

But we do mean to say, that the mind and conscience of the Christian are emancipated from human authority; that no human power has any right to dictate to him what he is to believe, and what he is to do in matters of religious and moral duty; and that, in the degree in which he is an enlightened Christian, he acts on the principle, that he ought to "call no man on earth master," but in the exercise of his own faculties, aided by the promised Spirit, to endeavour to ascertain what is the mind and will of the "one Master, who is in heaven," and having ascertained it, to "walk at liberty, keeping his commandments."

There is a natural tendency in man to usurp spiritual authority over man; and what seems strange, there is a natural tendency, too, to submit to this usurpation. By far the greater part of mankind have no better reason for their religious opinions, ordinances, and usages, than that they have "received them by tradition from their fathers."¹ What is taught and received as religious truth and duty, is to them nothing more than "the commandments of men." The great body even of those who assume to themselves the honourable appellation, free-thinkers, are nothing less than what that appellation expresses. They are almost universally the blind followers of their blind, self-chosen guides; the veriest slaves of human authority, in one of its least creditable forms.

When a man becomes a Christian, in the recognition of the supreme and sole authority, in all matters of religious truth and duty, of God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has

¹ 1 Pet. i. 18; Matt. xv. 9.

sent, there is necessarily implied the renunciation of all human authority. If the one Master be in heaven, there can be no master on earth. A Christian, acting worthy of the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free, believes no doctrine but what he is persuaded Christ has taught; observes no ordinance but what he believes Christ has appointed; performs nothing as a duty but what he is convinced Christ has enjoined. He gratefully acknowledges as helpers of his faith, all who will assist him in obtaining wider, clearer, more impressive views of the mind and will of the supreme Teacher and Sovereign; such he counts his greatest benefactors: but lords of his faith he will not recognise, even in the wisest and best of men. He feels that there is but one with whom he has to do, as authority, in religion; "one lawgiver, who can save and who can destroy;"¹ and that he must stand before His judgment-seat, and give an account of himself to HIM. The answer to the questions, What say the fathers? what say the reformers? what say the symbolical books?—the answer to any or all of these questions does not determine his faith: it is the answer to the question, What saith the Lord? "what is written in the law? how readest thou?"² which fixes his decision. This is the touchstone by which he examines all religious doctrines and institutions. "To the law, and to the testimony: if men speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."³ To be the servants of men is unworthy of the condition and character of spiritual freemen, to which Christ by his Spirit, through the faith of the truth, hath raised all his people. Their judgments must not be guided—when they act like themselves they will not be guided—by the writings of Luther or Calvin, nor based on the decisions of councils, however venerable. They will honour their fellow-dis-

¹ James iv. 12.² Luke x. 26.³ Isa. viii. 20.

ciples, especially such of them as have obviously profited by the teaching of their common Master; but they will sit only at his feet, and take the law only from his mouth.

There is another aspect of the Christian's freedom, in reference to his fellow-men, that deserves to be cursorily noticed before leaving this part of our subject. Human approbation, in some form or other, is a leading object with the great body of mankind, and exercises a powerful influence over their conduct. They seek the praise, they fear the censure, and reproach, and revilings, of men; and they fashion their conduct so as to secure the one and avoid the other. With the Christian, divine approbation is the great object. He seeks "the honour which comes down from above;" and in doing this, he is set free from the enslaving influence of the hopes and fears which spring out of an exaggerated estimate of the value of the good opinion of men. With him, "it is a very small thing to be judged of man's judgment;" for he believes that "there is one that judgeth him, that is the Lord."¹

(3.) *Free in reference to the power and principles of evil.*

Let us now look at the third aspect of the Christian's condition as *free*. He is free in reference to the powers and principles of evil. By the powers of evil, I understand the devil,—that crafty, and powerful, and active spiritual being, of whom we read so often in Scripture, and of whose personal existence I think no unprejudiced reader of the Sacred Volume can entertain a doubt, who introduced moral evil into our world in the beginning of the history of our race, and has been ceaselessly endeavouring, with but too much success, to uphold and extend its influence,—and his subordinate agents, "the evil angels." By the principles of evil, I understand the various depraved pro-

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 3.

pensities of our fallen nature, acted on by the present world, "things seen and temporal."

By these powers and principles all men are naturally enslaved. The evil spirit is "the god of this world;" he "worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience;" he "leads them captive at his will." They "are of their father the devil; and the lusts of their father," the things which he desires and delights in, "they will do," they choose to "do."¹ Though to a great degree the unconscious, they are not the less the devoted, servants of the wicked one.

When a man becomes a Christian, he is delivered from the power of Satan. "The prey is taken from the mighty, and the captive of the terrible one is delivered." The Christian by no means ceases on his conversion to be the object of the malignant attempts of his great enemy, who, "like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour"²—like a cunning serpent, lies in wait to dart into the soul the poison and pollution of sin. But he ceases to be his slave: his new state of favour with God secures for him the protection of a power, compared with which diabolical power is weakness; and the guidance of a wisdom, compared with which diabolical craft is folly; so that he can "tread upon the lion and the adder; the young lion and the dragon he can trample under foot:" and the good Spirit, by the instrumentality of his word, furnishes him with principles which enable him to baffle all Satan's devices, and frustrate all his attempts to regain his lost dominion.

Men are by nature not only the slaves of Satan, but they are represented as "serving divers lusts and pleasures," as the "servants of sin:" "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant," the slave, "of sin." The apostle represents them

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 4; 2 Tim. ii. 26; John viii. 44.

² Isa. xlix. 24; 1 Pet. v. 8.

as so “the servants, the slaves of sin,” as to be “freemen¹ so far as righteousness is concerned,” that is, to be entirely uninfluenced by holy principle, to be wholly under the power of evil—“sin reigning over their mortal body,” while they “obey it by means of the desires of the body,” and “yield their members to it as the instruments of unrighteousness.” Such were some, such were all, true Christians, previously to their conversion; but God be thanked, that they who were the servants of sin, have, by obeying from the heart the form of doctrine which has been delivered to them, been “made free from sin,” freemen in reference to sin, and have become “the servants of righteousness;” no longer “yielding their members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity, but yielding their members servants to righteousness unto holiness.”²

By the faith of the truth they are so identified with Christ, as that his death, resurrection, and new life are theirs. They are brought under their influence, both justifying and sanctifying; “so that, as he died unto sin once, and being raised from the dead dieth no more, death having no more dominion over him, but liveth to God, they also reckon themselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord:” and the consequence is, they no longer “let sin reign in their mortal body, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof;” neither do they yield their members to it as instruments of unrighteousness, but they yield themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God. “For sin no longer has dominion over them: for they are not under the law, but under grace.” “Whoso is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.”³

¹ See note B.

² John viii. 34; Rom. vi. 16-20.

³ Rom. vi. 9-14; 1 John iii. 9.

The new nature is a holy nature; and, so far as a man possesses this nature, he does not, he cannot, sin. And every man who possesses it at all, possesses it in such a degree as that he habitually hates and avoids sin. Not that any Christian in the present state is completely freed from the influence of depraved principle: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." While we are in the present state, "there is a law in our members which wars against the law of the mind;" but the Christian "consents to the law that it is good," "delights in the law of God after the inner man;" and though "with the flesh," that is, so far as he is unrenewed, "he serves the law of sin," yet with the spirit, that is, so far as he is renewed (and this constitutes his prevailing abiding character), "he serves the law of God;" and though often, when he loses sight of the truth, which sanctifies as well as comforts, he is constrained to sigh out, "Wretched man, who shall deliver me?" yet, habitually, he rejoices in the begun and advancing emancipation from the principles of evil, "thanking God through Jesus Christ," who hath delivered, who is delivering, and who will deliver; rejoicing that not only is "there no condemnation to him, being in Christ Jesus," but that the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made him free from the law of sin and of death."¹

§ 2. *Christians are the servants of God.*

Having made these cursory remarks on the condition of Christians as free,—free in reference to God, free in reference to man, free in reference to the powers and principles of evil,—let us now for a little attend to the second view of their condition. While in one point of view they are free, in another they are "servants, servants of God." These

¹ 1 John i. 8; Rom. vii. 14, viii. 2.

are by no means inconsistent representations. So far from this, it is only by becoming the servants of God that men can cease to be the slaves of Satan and sin. The only true liberty of which a dependent being like man is capable, is the free use of his faculties in the service of God. Independence, strictly speaking, belongs only to God. Man, in seeking it, instead of obtaining, lost liberty. Seeking to be supreme lord of himself, refusing to be the servant of the best of Beings, he necessarily became a slave of the worst. It is the very condition of our being as creatures, that we serve: "we have not the liberty to choose whether we shall serve or not; all the liberty we have is to choose our master."¹

Men in their apostate state are not God's servants. They are "the children not of obedience," as Christians are; they are "the children of disobedience." In one sense, indeed, all men are God's servants. They are all bound to submit to his authority; they are all under his control; they are all employed by him in the execution of his purposes. But Christians are God's servants in a sense peculiar to themselves. They are his peculiar property; they have been formed by him to the character of his servants; they have voluntarily devoted themselves to his service; they habitually employ themselves in his service.

They are his servants, for they are his peculiar property. All men are God's property. "All that is in the heaven and in the earth is his." Men may renounce God's authority, but they cannot despoil him of any part of what belongs to him. But Christians are God's property in a peculiar sense. They are his "purchased possession." Justice had doomed them to death, and they were bought off, "not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without

¹ Sanderson.

spot, the blood of Christ." "Jesus Christ gave himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify them unto Himself a peculiar people."

As God purchased them to be his servants, so by the influence of his good Spirit he has qualified them for his service. Well may he say to each of them, "Remember, thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant;" and of them all as a body, "This people have I formed for myself, that they may show forth my praise." He has "shed abroad his love in their hearts;" he has "put his fear in their hearts." He has "put his law in their inward parts, and written it in their hearts." He has "created them anew in Christ Jesus unto good works," and "transformed them, by the renewing of their minds;" and, under the influence of his good Spirit, he has induced them gladly and gratefully to enter into his service, to assume his easy yoke, to take up his light burden. He has made them see and feel the irresistible force of his infinite excellence and kindness as a motive to obedience. He has manifested to them "the great love wherewith he has loved them," and "blessed them with all heavenly and spiritual blessings;" so that they have been constrained to say, "What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits? Truly, O Lord, we are thy servants; we are thy servants: thou hast loosed our bonds." "Other lords have had dominion over us; but by thee only we will make mention of thy name."¹

Finally, they are his servants, for they habitually employ themselves in his service. Christians, knowing that "they are not their own, but bought with a price," glorify "with their bodies, and with their spirits, which are God's," Him who has bought them. Influenced by his mercies, they present themselves to him as "living sacrifices, holy and

¹ Isa. xliv. 21, xliii. 21; Rom. v. 5; Jer. xxxii. 40, xxxi. 33; Eph. ii. 10; Rom. xii. 2; Eph. i. 2, 11, 4; Ps. cxvi. 12, 16; Isa. xxvi. 13.

acceptable, which is their rational worship." Delivered by him from their former tyrants, "they serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of their life." They acknowledge that it is their duty, they know that it is their prevailing desire, to be entirely conformed to the will of their Lord: "Whether they eat, or drink, or whatsoever they do, they" would "do all to his glory." "Whatsoever they do in word or in deed, they would do it in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Their desire is, "to be in the world as Jehovah's elect servant was in the world, always about their Master's, their Father's, business; finding it their meat to do his will, and finish his work."¹

It concerns us all seriously to inquire, if the condition which has been described be ours. Are we experimentally acquainted with this liberty of the children of God; are we the servants of God? The question should not be a difficult one to answer. On this subject, I believe, there may be presumptuous confidence. Where there is not only no evidence for, but very much evidence against, a favourable answer, there are men "who speak great swelling words of vanity" about their Christian liberty, while their whole character and conduct proclaim them "servants of corruption." The only permanent satisfactory evidence that we are God's freemen is, habitual gratitude for our emancipation, showing itself in our "serving him without fear, in holiness and righteousness," "walking before him in love." The only permanent satisfactory evidence that we are God's servants is, our doing his work.

Owing to a variety of causes, there may be hesitation and doubt, where there is such evidence as ought to lay the foundation of humble confidence. But there is something

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; Rom. xii. 1; Luke i. 74, 75; 1 Cor. x. 31; Col. iii. 17; 1 John iv. 17; John iv. 34.

wrong here also. Doubt on such a subject is in no case a good symptom, and it is obviously a matter of duty, no less than of prudence, to seek certainty on a point so vitally connected with our highest interests. If we are indeed "free," and "the servants of God," why, by remaining in doubt about it, deprive ourselves of the abundant consolation, the good hope, the varied and powerful motives to holiness, which a clear satisfactory persuasion of this truth would naturally produce? And if we are not "free," if we are not the servants of God, and if, continuing in this condition, our final perdition is absolutely certain, is it not at least equally important that we should be distinctly aware of it? We may, though now slaves, yet be emancipated; we may, though now the servants of sin, yet become the servants of God.

One cause why many men remain at ease in a state of unconversion is, the ill-founded hope that they have been converted, or, at any rate, the absence of a thorough conviction that they are yet unconverted. Let us honestly turn to account, for the purposes of self-inquiry, the plain truths brought forward in this discourse, and we must arrive at a conclusion respecting our true spiritual condition.

And should that conclusion prove an unfavourable one, as I am afraid might be the case with some now present, oh, let them continue no longer in a state so degrading and dangerous! Brethren, you need not remain slaves. The ransom has been paid; the Deliverer stands ready to loose your fetters; and if you continue unemancipated, it is because you will not avail yourselves of the atoning sacrifice, and the quickening Spirit of the Saviour. Think what the wages of your degrading servitude will be: "Death," "the second death," "everlasting destruction." "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;" "If ye sow to the flesh, ye shall of the flesh reap corruption." Consider, too, if you perish, you perish not unwarned; you have been told, most

distinctly told, what must be the end of these things : “ Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry : behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty : behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed : behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for vexation of spirit.”¹ “ Choose *now* whom ye will serve.” There is surely no room for hesitation here : slavery or freedom ; the slavery of Satan or the liberty of the children of God ; the burning lake and the bottomless pit, or fulness of joy, rivers of pleasure, for evermore : these are the alternatives. There is no time for delay. “ To-day, if ye will hear his voice ;” to-morrow you may be beyond its reach.

Should the conclusion prove a favourable one, as I trust it will in some, in many instances, O how strong the obligations to distinguishing grace ; how loud the calls to grateful acknowledgment ; how powerful the motives to progressive holiness ! “ The more we attain unto the faculty of serving him cheerfully and diligently, the more still shall we find of this spiritual liberty, and have the more joy in it. O that we could live as his servants, employing all our industry to do him service in the condition and place wherein he hath set us, whatsoever that is ; and as faithful servants, more careful of his affairs than of our own, accounting it our main business to seek the advancement of his glory. ‘ Happy is the servant whom the Master, when he cometh, shall find so doing.’ ”²

II. THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS.

I proceed now to the consideration of the view that is given us of the Christian’s duty. His duty is generally to

¹ Isa. lxxv. 13-15.

² Leighton.

act conformably with his condition; to behave himself at once like a freeman and a servant,¹ while he guards against the abuse of the liberty wherewith he has been made free. He is to act "as free," yet taking care not to make his "liberty a cloak of maliciousness;" and he is to act as the "servant of God:" he is to use his freedom; he is not to abuse it; and he is to exemplify his condition as the servant of God. Let us attend to these three general views of the Christian's duty in succession.

§ 1. *The Christian's duty to use his freedom; to act
"as free."*

First, then, Christians are to act as free. Their conduct is to correspond with their condition as freemen, not slaves. The whole frame of their temper and behaviour is to correspond to that liberty which is well called Christian liberty, being purchased by the blood of Christ, that "blood of the covenant" by which "the prisoners of hope" are "sent forth out of the pit wherein is no water;" revealed to us in the gospel of Christ, that "royal law," that "law of liberty;" and conveyed to us, bestowed on us, by that "free Spirit" of Christ, who, wherever he comes, brings liberty along with him.² The best way of bringing out the truth on this subject, in a way in which it can easily be turned to practical purposes, will, I believe, be shortly to attend to the Christian's duty as to the maintenance and use of his freedom in the three aspects in which we have already contemplated it: freedom in reference to God; freedom in reference to man; freedom in reference to the powers and principles of evil.

¹ Christianorum libertas est serva libertas, quia liberati sunt, ut Deo serviant; et libera servitus, quia non coacté sed sponte Deo et Magistratui obediunt.—GERHARD.

² Zech. ix. 11; James i. 25, 11, 8; Ps. li. 12.

(1.) “*As free*” in reference to God.

The Christian is to act “as free” in reference to God. When I say the Christian is to act as free, I refer to the actings, not only, nor principally, of the outer man, but of “the inner man” of the mind and heart. What is fundamental here is the maintenance of a firm faith of that Christian truth, that truth as it is in Jesus, by which the Christian was freed both from the condition and dispositions of a slave, brought into the state and formed to the character of a freeman; and the cherishing of that humble yet confident assurance, that he is in a state of favour with God, which naturally grows out of this faith, and its necessary effects on the character and conduct.

Many professors of Christianity seem to labour under a serious mistake on this subject. Uncertainty, doubt, perplexity, fear, seem to be the elementary principles of their religion; they seem to think the better of themselves that they have no “confidence towards God,” no settled satisfaction respecting their highest interest; they appear to consider anxiety and alarm as the best proofs of spiritual life, the best motives to spiritual activity; and that the securest way of getting to heaven, is by no means to anticipate as certain, or even very probable, the getting there at last, but to be “all their lifetime subject to bondage through fear of death,” and what is to follow it. They seem to think that it would be presumption in any man to entertain that “good hope through grace” which the apostles cherished, and which they call on all Christians to cherish. This may have, as the apostle expresses it, “a show of humility;” but it exhibits a deplorable ignorance of the first principles of Christian truth, an entire unacquaintance with the genius of the gospel economy.

There are, as we have already hinted, two things which

a Christian should earnestly seek to hold stedfastly when he has obtained them, in order to his acting as a freeman towards God,—“the assurance of faith,” and “the assurance of hope.” The first refers to the testimony of God respecting the Saviour and his salvation. The second refers to the expectation of the personal enjoyment of the Saviour and his salvation. No man is a Christian at all who has not both the faith and the hope of the gospel; and the measure of the holiness and the happiness of any individual Christian, is just the degree of this faith and hope, which are always proportioned to each other.

Surely there can be nothing good, there must be all that is evil, in doubting the testimony of God, that is, in treating the God of truth as if he were a liar. This is, properly speaking, unbelief: that which makes men slaves, and keeps them so; that which prevents men from coming to God, and leads them to depart from him. It is the truth which makes us free. It is only as believed that it can do so: it is only in the degree that it is believed that it can do so. Doubt with regard to the saving truth can never be right in any man: in a Christian it is doubly folly and sin, and is indeed, as it were, spiritual suicide.

Doubt with respect to the safety of our own state, which is a very different matter from doubt of the saving truth, though the two things have intimate and interesting relations to each other, is in no case a desirable or even a proper state of mind. There may be but too much ground for it, both on the part of the unconverted and of the converted man; but still it is a state which ought not to exist. As to the unconverted man, he ought not to be in *doubt* about his spiritual state; he ought to *know* his state to be one of deep guilt and imminent danger. While he only doubts that all is not right, he is not in the way of being saved. He must know that all is wrong. He must be brought to see himself

lost, else he never will come to the Saviour; and if he were not wilfully blind, he could not help seeing that there is no room for doubt in his case. He is "condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." And there needs be no doubt about the matter; it is just as certain as the plain declaration of the God of truth can make it.

There may be ground for doubt as to the safety of his state in the case even of a converted man. Not that we believe that any really converted man shall not be saved. We are fully persuaded of the truth of that declaration of the faithful and true Witness: "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and none can pluck them out of my Father's hand."¹ But if a converted man lose sight of the truth, which in one view is the great source, in another the only channel, of true holiness and comfort in the human heart, and losing sight of that truth, fall under the power of worldly lusts, and "lust having conceived, bringeth forth sin,"² then doubts about the safety of his spiritual state, if he is not sunk into utter stupidity or strong delusion, must prevail. But this is plainly a state into which the Christian ought not to have brought himself; and it is as plainly a state out of which the sooner he gets, so much the better. Till he does, he can neither enjoy comfort nor make progress in holiness; and he can be brought out of it in no other way than by the truth which first made him free, again, through being anew apprehended in its meaning and evidence, exerting its natural influence, and thus both directly and indirectly furnishing his mind with satisfactory evidence that he is in a state of spiritual freedom.

This, then, is the first way, Christian brethren, in which

¹ John x. 28, 29.

² James i. 15.

you are to act as free towards God. Hold fast the faith of "the truth as it is in Jesus." Continue to count it "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came to save sinners, even the chief." Reckon the divine testimony, that "God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses; for he hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,"¹ the very truth most sure. Seek the full assurance of faith respecting the Saviour's person and work, the fulness and freeness of his salvation. Keep always before your mind, as the great reality, God as holy love.

And then, in the second place, hold fast the hope of the gospel; cherish an undoubting expectation of "the salvation that is in Christ, with eternal glory." Never doubt but that God will do to you all that he has said. "Hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope," founded on the faith of the gospel, "stedfast to the end." "Hold fast the beginning of your confidence," your first confidence, as sinners deserving hell, and never capable of deserving anything else, yet hoping for eternal life, as the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. "Give all diligence to the full assurance of this hope to the end."²

Then, under the influence of this faith and hope, engage with humble, joyful confidence in all the duties both of interior and exterior religion. "In the full assurance of faith" that "we have a great High Priest, who for us hath entered into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God," go "boldly to the throne of grace." "Trust in the Lord; pour out your heart before him." Make him your refuge; knowing his name, put your confidence in him, and say, "My ex-

¹ 1 Tim. i. 15; 2 Cor. v. 19, 21.

² Heb. ii. 6, 14, vi. 11; Ps. lxii. 1, 2, 7, 8; Phil. iv. 6, 7, 19; Heb. x. 14-23.

pectation is from him. He is my rock, and my salvation ; he is my defence ; I shall not be moved. For God is my salvation and my glory ; the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God." "Be careful," anxious, "for nothing ; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your request known to God," in the assured expectation that he will "supply your need according to his glorious riches," and make his "peace keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus." And "having confidence," full persuasion, respecting the entrance of Jesus, even the entrance of his flesh into the holiest, by blood, by which he has consecrated for us a new and living way into the holiest, "draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having your hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and your bodies washed with pure water, hold fast your profession." Pray to him, and "ask in faith, nothing wavering;" believing that, "if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, much more shall he give good things to them who ask him." "Come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise to him with psalms. Serve him with gladness ; come before his presence with singing. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise ; be thankful to him, and bless his name." In the same spirit perform all the duties enjoined on you. Walk at liberty, keeping his commandments. Make it evident that you account his yoke an easy yoke, his burden a light burden. "Run in the way of his commandments," thus making it evident that he has "enlarged your hearts." And "count it all joy when you are brought into manifold trials." Do not suffer as one who must suffer, but as one who would suffer, since such is the will of God. "Be patient," "be joyful in tribulations," knowing they are not the punishment of the slave, but the chastisement of the child.

In fine, act as free in reference to God, by manifesting habitually a self-possessed, happy, contented mind. Let your whole demeanour speak the satisfaction you have in your privileges and hopes as freemen, the denizens of the New Jerusalem, "Jerusalem from above, which is free." Let your mien and gait be those of the children of a king. "Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice."¹

Oh! how holy, how happy, would Christians be, were they thus to rise above the influence of the spirit of bondage, the spirit of fear, and to yield themselves to the full influence of the spirit of adoption, teaching them habitually to cry, "Abba, Father!" How easy would be the most laborious duties, how light the heaviest afflictions, if, in obedience to the merciful injunction in the text, we would but think, and feel, and act, as freemen in reference to God!

(2.) "*As free*" in reference to man.

I proceed to remark, that the Christian should act "as free" in reference to man. He should allow the truth, respecting his freedom from human dominion in reference to faith and duty, to produce its proper effect, both in preventing him from subjecting his own mind and conscience to human authority, and from attempting to subject the mind and conscience of others to his authority, or to the authority of others to whom he may have incautiously yielded an undue deference.

The command of our Lord in reference to the former of these manifestations of freedom is very explicit. "Be not ye the servants of men." "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled in

¹ Heb. iv. 14, 16, x. 22; Ps. lxii. 1, 2, 7, 8; Phil. iv. 6, 7, 19; Heb. x. 19-23; James i. 6; Matt. vii. 7; Ps. c.; James i. 3; Rom. xii. 12; 2 Cor. vii. 4; Phil. iii. 1, iv. 4.

any yoke of bondage." "Let no man spoil you."¹ The Christian does not act in character if he receive any doctrine, observe any ordinance, perform any duty, on any ground, except that he has seen with his own eyes, in what he knows to be a divine revelation, that Christ has revealed the doctrine, appointed the institution, enjoined the duty. Christians obviously act at variance with their high calling, which is to liberty, when, in deference to human authority, they receive doctrines which Christ has not revealed, observe ordinances which he has not instituted, and perform as a duty what he never made one, or what, it may be, he has forbidden as a sin. When a Christian is tempted to do any of these things, he is distinctly to say to those who would bring him into bondage, Who gave you authority over my conscience? Who authorized you to add to, to alter, or to repeal, any of Christ's ordinances? I have a Lord of the conscience, but it is not you; if I were your servant, I could not be His. "Whether it be right in the sight of God to obey men rather than God, judge ye."²

But Christians must not only refuse to submit to receive from men institutions, doctrines, and precepts, different from those authorized by Christ; but they must take care to receive Christ's institutions, doctrines, and laws on his own authority, and not on that of men. A man's creed may be in accordance with Christian truth, and he may observe no ordinance but what Christ has appointed, and yet he may be a slave to human authority; for he receives the one and observes the other, not because he has, in the free exercise of his own mind, seen that they bear the stamp of Christ's authority, but because he has been taught them by his parents, or has found them in the writings of authors to whom he has been accustomed to yield great deference.

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 23; Gal. v. 1; Col. ii. 8.

² Acts iv. 19.

Such a man, instead of being free from man, not only serves man, but worships him. He puts him in the place of God or his Son, of the one Father or the one Master. It has been admirably said by one of the greatest ornaments of our denomination, "To yield up our judgment in religious matters to any individual, or to any church, is to invest that individual or that church with the attribute of infallibility; and consequently, while we retain the character of Protestants, practically to adopt one of the worst errors of Popery. You can have no certainty that any doctrine which you hold is true, unless you have seen it with your own eyes in the Scriptures. The faith, therefore, of those who submit to be guided by the sentiments of others, however learned, and wise, and holy, is downright presumption; a venture in the most important of all concerns upon the diligence, the impartiality, and the capacity of others, of which they can never be fully assured. Let them seriously consider, that although their creed may happen to be right, its orthodoxy will not recommend them to God; who perceives, in their undue respect for human authority, a criminal indifference to truth, and a virtual rejection of his authority, as the only foundation of faith."¹

Or, to use the words of Bishop Sanderson,² one of the ablest divines of the English Church of a former age: "Is it not blameworthy in us, and a proof of our carnality, to give up our judgments to be guided by the writings of Luther, or Calvin, or any other mortal man whatsoever? Worthy instruments they were, both of them, of God's glory, and such as did excellent service to the Church in

¹ Dr Dick.

² I gratefully confess myself indebted to the elaborate discourse from which this quotation is made for many good thoughts and pithy expressions; which are, however, so mixed up with my own thoughts and composition, as not to admit of particular acknowledgment.

these times, whereof we yet find the benefit; and we are unthankful if we do not bless God for it: and therefore it is an unsavoury thing for any man to gird at their names, whose memories should be precious. But yet, were they not men? Had they received the Spirit in the fulness of it, and not by measure? Knew they otherwise than in part, or prophesied otherwise than in part? Might they not in many things, and did they not in some things, mistake and err? Howsoever, the apostle's interrogatories are unanswerable. What saith he? 'Was Paul crucified for you; or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?' Even so, was either Luther or Calvin crucified for you? Or were ye baptized into the name of Luther, or Calvin, or any other man, that any one of you should say, I am of Luther; or any other, I am of Calvin; and I of him, and I of him? What is Calvin, or Luther, but 'ministers by whom ye believed;' that is to say, instruments, but not lords, of your belief?"

It is an important part, both of Christian prudence and Christian duty, to avoid all unnecessary dependence on, or obligation to, our fellow-men, as calculated to endanger our Christian independence of mind and spirit. There may be entire inward freedom from man, amidst deep external dependence. But dependence is not of itself desirable, in reference to the higher objects of the Christian life. Even to Christian slaves the apostle says, "If thou mayest be free, use it rather." Christians should act on the ennobling principles and precepts of their Lord: "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" "Owe no man anything, but to love one another;" "Be not the servants of men."

But Christians should act as free, not only in refusing to submit to human authority in religion themselves, but also in carefully abstaining from imposing the yoke of human authority on others. Their freedom should be manifested,

not only in maintaining their own privileges as free, but in respecting the privileges of others. It is a curious inconsistency that not unfrequently occurs in human character, that men clamorous for, or jealous of, their own liberties, as they understand them, should yet be constantly invading the liberties of others. Unfond of being ruled, they are very fond of ruling. Wherever this is the case, the genuine spirit of liberty is wanting. Nowhere does this incongruity appear more monstrous than among professing Christians. An enlightened Christian distinctly perceives that his freedom from human authority is no peculiar privilege: he sees that it belongs equally to all Christians; nay, that it belongs equally to all men; and that, for religious opinions and usages, man is answerable to God only. He sees, that on this subject the privileges, the duty, and the responsibility of all men are substantially the same; and he acts on the principle, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."¹ Holding, as he does, that man can confer no favour on man higher than the communication of just views of religious truth and duty, he is ready, by statement and argument, to endeavour to bring men to believe what he believes, because he accounts it truth, and to do what he does, because he accounts it duty; but he does not use any other means. He dares not use force; he dares not use bribes; he dares not use any influence but the influence of truth.

Where the difference of opinion involves, in his estimation, the essence of Christian truth and duty, he, of course, must decline acknowledging as a Christian the individual who thus differs from him; but even here, though he may, though he must, think that that individual has not wisely nor rightly exercised his undoubted right of judging for himself, he never thinks of denying that he has that right.

¹ Matt. vii. 12.

He endeavours to think as favourably of him as circumstances will admit; recollects that he is not his judge; and rests satisfied that He who is the final Judge will in this case, as in all others, do what is right.

Where the difference of opinion does not affect the essence of Christianity, he not only does not attempt to impose his opinion on his brother, but he does not allow the difference of opinion at all to influence his conduct to him as a Christian brother. If he has evidence that Christ has received him, he receives him, and gives him all the liberty he himself claims; and does this not as if he were granting him a boon, but merely as respecting that common Christian liberty which Christ has given to all his disciples.

We have a beautiful instance of this mode of acting "as free," in the case of the apostle and the weak brethren, who made a distinction of meats and days. He would not allow them to impose their views on him. To any such attempt he gave the most strenuous opposition. He would not submit to it; "no, not for an hour." But though he knew they were in a mistake, he does not seek to impose his views on them. He was persuaded that they, as well as he, revered the authority of their common Lord; that they who observed the day, observed it to the Lord, just as he to the Lord did not observe it. He recollected, that in every such case "every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind," that "whatsoever is not of faith is sin," and that "every one must give an account of HIMSELF to God;" and recognising, in the common subjection of mind to the seen authority of Christ, a bond of union stronger than any cause of alienation or separation, in honest differences, as to what is the mind of the Lord on certain minor points, he received these weak brethren as Christ had received them; and while desirous to enlighten

them, he was better pleased, till they were enlightened, that they should act according to their own conscientious views, though limited and incorrect, than according to his conscientious views, though wide and accurate. And he exhorted the two parties, which were then, as still, to be found in every Christian society, the strong as well as the weak, to allow one another to walk at liberty; forbidding the weak to condemn the strong, which they were apt to do, and the strong to despise the weak, which they were just as apt to do; cautioning them both against hindering or “destroying the work of God” by their mutual contentions; forbidding them “to judge one another” in such cases, but calling on them “to judge this rather, that no one put a stumbling-block in his brother’s way;” putting them in mind of the impropriety of “judging another man’s servant;” suggesting the solemn thought, “Every man must give an account of HIMSELF,” not of his brother, “to God;” forbidding them to separate on such grounds, to dissolve the bonds either of Christian love or church fellowship; and commanding them, “so far as they have already attained, to walk by the same rule, and to mind the same thing;” assured that this is the way to come to a closer agreement on subjects on which they conscientiously differed.¹ How happy would it have been for the Church had Christians always acted thus, “as free;” treating each other as the Lord’s freemen; not attempting to lord it over one another’s consciences! And how often would the reader of ecclesiastical history have been spared the painful necessity of observing in how many instances our Lord’s saying has been verified, “Woe unto the world because of offences!”

¹ Rom. xiv. *passim*.

(3.) *“As free” in reference to the powers and principles of evil.*

It is now time that I remark, in the third place, that Christians should act “as free” in reference to the powers and principles of evil. In their contests with their spiritual enemies, whether these are the spirits of darkness, the influences of the present evil world, or the remaining sinful propensities of their fallen and but imperfectly renewed nature, they should think, and feel, and act as freemen, and not as slaves. When an unconverted man, aroused by whatever means to a sense of his danger from these quarters, attempts something like opposition, he is as a man fighting in chains; his resistance is short, fitful, and feeble; the victory of his enemies certain, speedy, and complete. The issue of all such conflicts is confirmed slavery. And even the Christian, if he enter on the combat with these enemies under the influence of “the spirit of bondage,” makes little head against them. But if, when assailed by his great enemy, he know and believe that the Captain of salvation has vanquished him and his legions, and have entire confidence in the promise, that “Satan shall be bruised under his feet shortly;”¹ if, like a freeman, who, though once the prey of the mighty, has been rescued out of his grasp, who, though once his captive, now walks at liberty, he take to him the “shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,” he is sure of victory. This is “the whole armour of God;” and clothed in this panoply, and wielding these weapons, he resists the devil, so that he flees from him. It is thus that he is able to “quench all his fiery darts,” and to “turn to flight the armies of the aliens.” Conscious of the value of freedom,

¹ Rom. xvi. 20.

carefully guarding himself from being entangled in Satan's "snare," or "taken captive by him at his will," and acquitting himself like "a good soldier of Jesus Christ,"

" There's not a chain
That hellish foes confed'rate for his harm,
Can wind around him, but he casts it off
With as much ease as Samson his green wyths." ¹

In reference to the evil influences of the present world, things seen and temporal, let the Christian act as free, and show that he has been "delivered from the present evil world" by Christ giving Himself for him; that by the cross of Christ, the world, which once, as a mighty monarch, swayed resistless power over him, is now crucified to him—a powerless, contemptible, accursed thing. Let him show that he feels that he is become free of the universe, and for eternity, by becoming the child of the Lord of the universe, who liveth for ever and ever; and that the vain, unreal, shadowy hopes and fears of this narrow, shortlived scene, are no longer to be the great moving principles of his conduct. Let him act as if the world, so far as it is fitted to promote his welfare, instead of being his master, were a part of his property. He is not the world's, the world is his, he is an inheritor of the world; and considered, as it often is in Scripture, as an enemy, let him show that "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." ²

As to the propensities of his fallen and imperfectly renewed nature, so far as they are depraved, let him treat them as vanquished enemies, despoiled of their dominion, concerning whom the sentence has gone forth, "Sin shall not have dominion over you." Let him consider them as, like the Canaanites of old, doomed to utter destruction: "let not his eye pity, nor his hand spare." Let him "mortify

¹ Cowper.

² 1 John v. 4.

his members that are on the earth," "crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts," resolutely "cut off" the offending "right hand," "pluck out" the offending "right eye," and cast them from him as an abominable thing. And so far as they are an original part of his nature, not to be extirpated but improved, let him remember that now he is not their servant—they are his; and let him use them as the efficient instruments of promoting the glory of his great Deliverer. The best illustration of this part of the subject that is anywhere to be met with, is to be found in the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof: neither yield ye your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but yield yourselves to God, as those who are alive from the dead, and your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, ye were the servants of sin; but ye have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine which has been delivered to you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. As then ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now, being made free from sin, and

become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death ; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”¹

So much for the illustration of the first part of the general view of the Christian’s duty. He ought to act in a correspondence to his state of liberty, “as free” in reference to God, in reference to men, in reference to the powers and principles of evil.

Many of the inducements which should influence the Christian to act “as free,” to maintain and assert his Christian liberty, have come before our minds in the course of our illustration of this duty. It may serve a good purpose, however, to glance at a few more before concluding this part of the discussion.

You cannot, my Christian brethren, neglect compliance with this injunction, ‘Be “as free”—act in accordance with your condition as a condition of liberty,’ without obvious injustice to Him whom you acknowledge as your only Lord. You are His. He has bought you from slavery to liberty. When you act as free, you use his property in the way he wishes it to be used. But when you act otherwise,—when you serve men, or the devil, or the world, or the flesh,—you abuse his property ; you dishonestly employ it for a purpose different from, opposite to, that for which he intended, to which he had destined it. “Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price.” “Be not then the servants of men ;” be not the servants of Satan ; be not the servants of divers lusts and pleasures.

But not only will you do injustice to Christ, you will do foul dishonour to God, if you do not act “as free.” You will allow something else to occupy his place. He must be dishonoured, whoever or whatever is put in his room. But

¹ Rom. vi. 11-23.

when you serve mammon, serve your own belly, serve Satan, the worst of all beings, while you ought to "worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him," O how deeply do you dishonour him!

Nor do you dishonour God only; you dishonour yourselves. You do not "walk worthy" of the privileges which have been conferred on you. "Ye know," or at least ye ought to know, "your calling, brethren." It is "a high and holy one." "Ye have been called unto liberty." If you are servants, you are servants only of Him, whom to serve is the greatest honour which the most exalted creature can enjoy. It is immeasurable degradation for you to become the servants of men or devils, or worldly lusts and sinful passions.

Nor is there only degradation in it; there is fatiguing, profitless labour. Christ's yoke is an easy yoke; Christ's burden is a light burden. "His commandments are not grievous."¹ O how much is it otherwise with the yoke, and burdens, and commandments of his rivals! "They who follow lying vanities, forsake their own mercies." Every Christian who has made the experiment (and, alas! every Christian has made the experiment but too often), knows, like the Israelites of old, "the difference between Jehovah's service and the service of the kingdoms of the countries."² As you would not, then, rob the Lord who bought you, as you would not dishonour God, and disgrace yourselves, and wear yourselves out with fruitless fatigues and thankless labour, "walk at liberty, keeping his precepts;" "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be not entangled with any yoke of bondage."

Well may Christians triumph in, and be jealous of, this glorious liberty; for as Luther, with his usual power, says, "Christ's truth maketh us free, not civilly, nor carnally, but

¹ 1 John v. 3.

² 2 Chron. xii. 8.

divinely. We are made free in such sort, that our conscience is free and quiet, not fearing the wrath of God to come. This is the true and inestimable liberty, to the excellency and majesty of which, if we compare the other, they are but as one drop of water in respect of the ocean. For who is able to express what a thing it is, when a man is assured in his heart that God neither is, nor ever will be, angry with him, but will be for ever a merciful and loving Father to him for Christ's sake! This is indeed a marvellous and incomprehensible liberty, to have the Most High Sovereign Majesty so favourable to us, that he doth not only defend, maintain, and succour us in this life; but also, as touching our bodies, will so deliver us, as that, though sown in corruption, dishonour, and infirmity, they shall rise again in incorruption, and glory, and power. This is an inestimable liberty, that we are made free from the wrath of God for ever; and is greater, more valuable, than heaven and earth, and the created universe. 'Blessed is the man who is in such a case; yea, blessed is the man whose God is the Lord.'"

§ 2. *The Christian's duty to guard against the abuse of his freedom.*

I proceed now to the consideration of the second department of the Christian's duty, as here delineated. He is to guard against misapprehending and misimproving his condition as free. He is to be careful, while using, not to abuse his liberty. He is not to use his liberty "as a cloak of maliciousness;" or, as the Apostle Paul has it in his Epistle to the Galatians, "he is not to use his liberty for an occasion to the flesh."¹ The first thing to be done here, is distinctly to apprehend the meaning of the terms in which this department of Christian duty is described. What are

¹ Gal. v. 13.

we to understand by “maliciousness?” what by “a cloak of maliciousness?” and what by “using our liberty as a cloak of maliciousness?”

The Greek word translated “maliciousness”¹ here, and “malice” in the first verse of this chapter, like the English words by which it is rendered, is often, when used along with other words descriptive of particular vices, such as anger, envy, covetousness, employed to describe that special vicious temper, and its manifestations, which is directly opposed to brotherly love and charity, so as to be equivalent to ill-will, malignity; but when standing by itself, as in the case before us, it seems ordinarily employed as a general name for sinful dispositions and actions, as equivalent to sin or wickedness. Thus, when Simon Magus is called on to repent of his profane and wicked proposal, to purchase miraculous power by money, he is called on to “repent of his wickedness,”² that is, his sin; and Christians are called on to be “in malice”—rather “in wickedness,” in sinful disposition and habit in all their forms—“children;” while they are to be “in understanding, men.”³ “Maliciousness” is here just equivalent to sin, of whatever kind; and the injunction seems quite parallel with that from the Epistle to the Galatians, just quoted, “Use not liberty as an occasion to the flesh,”—a general name for the depraved principles of fallen humanity, or for human nature as depraved.

But what are we to understand by “a cloak of wickedness?” The word rendered cloak,⁴ which occurs nowhere else in the New Testament, signifies a covering of any kind. It is the word employed in the Greek version of the Old Testament to denote the covering of badgers’ skins which was spread over the tabernacle.⁵ It is here obviously used figuratively. A cloak of wickedness is something by which

¹ Κακία.

² Acts viii. 22.

³ 1 Cor. xiv. 20.

⁴ Ἐπικάλυμμα.

⁵ Ex. xxvi. 14.

we attempt to conceal, from ourselves or others, the true character of some vicious disposition or action; an excuse, a pretext, an apology for wickedness. To cloak sin is to disguise wickedness. Our Lord says, that the Jews, who had heard his discourses and seen his miracles, had “no cloak” (not the same word as here, but a word of similar import)—that is, were deprived of every pretext, excuse, or apology—“for their sin” in rejecting him.¹ Josephus says, Joab had a plausible pretext for killing Abner, but he had no such cloak for the murder of Amasa. Men often attempt to conceal from others, and even from themselves, the true character of favourite vicious propensities and profitable sinful practices. Saul disobeyed God in not entirely destroying the property of the Amalekites; and he attempted to cloak his disobedience under the pretext of his being desirous of presenting a fit sacrifice to Jehovah.² Jezebel cloaked her murderous revenge against Naboth, under the pretext of zeal against blasphemy.³ Economy is made the cloak of avarice; generosity, of extravagance; caution, of indolence; religious zeal, of personal resentment. And here the apostle cautions Christians against cloaking wickedness under the pretext of liberty, against indulging any sinful temper, engaging in any sinful pursuit, under the mistaken impression, or the hypocritical pretence, that these were but the exercise of that liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. The general meaning, then, of the injunction, “Use not your liberty as a cloak of wickedness,” is thus sufficiently apparent. It may serve, however, a good purpose, to show how we ought to guard against such an abuse of our Christian liberty in the three different aspects in which we have been led to contemplate it: our liberty in reference to God; our liberty in reference to man; our liberty in reference to the powers and principles of evil.

¹ Πρόφασιν.—John xv. 22. ² 1 Sam. xv. 15. ³ 1 Kings xxi. 10.

(1.) *Cautions respecting abuses of liberty in reference to God.*

First, Christians must not use their liberty with respect to God as a cloak of wickedness. Those men do so, who, under the pretext that they are free in reference to God, consider themselves as released from obligation to make his law the rule of their conduct. The doctrine of the gospel undoubtedly is, that Christians are not subject to the Mosaic law; that nothing is obligatory on a Christian's conscience merely because it is contained in the law of Moses; and that the system of divine administration, under which they are placed in consequence of their connection with Christ, is not a system of mere law under which the rule is, "Do and live"—"He that doeth them, shall live in them," and no provision is made for the pardon of any offence,—but a system of grace, under which not only is a full and free pardon bestowed on every believer, and eternal life promised as a free gift through Jesus Christ our Lord; but "if any man," after believing, "sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, whose blood cleanseth from all sin;" and if any man who has sinned, availing himself of this divine arrangement, "confess his sins, God is faithful and just to forgive him his sins, and to cleanse him from all unrighteousness."¹ The apostolic statements embodying these principles—such as, that Christians are "dead to the law by the body of Christ;" that they are "delivered from the law, that being dead wherein they were held;" that "there is no condemnation to them;" that "Christ is the end of the law to every one that believeth;" that they are "not under the law, but grace;" that "Christ has redeemed them from the curse of the law, having become a curse for them;" that they "through the law are dead to the law;" that "they who are led by the Spirit

¹ 1 John i. 9.

are not under the law"¹—were liable to misapprehension and abuse, and have in all ages been misapprehended and abused.

The enemies of apostolical Christianity grounded on these statements one of their strongest objections against it—that it was a system that sapped the foundation of all religious and moral obligation; and not a few who professed to embrace the gospel, while they did not understand it, actually “turned the grace of our God into lasciviousness,” and the liberty which is in Christ into profane licentiousness; saying, and acting out the impious saying, Let us “continue in sin, because grace does abound.”² And this, we may remark by the way, is one of the proofs which we have, that what we call evangelical Christianity is indeed substantially apostolical Christianity, that we find the same objection urged against its principles by its opposers, and the same abuse made of them by men of corrupt minds who profess to embrace them. The system which many men would impose on us as Christianity, giving no occasion for such misrepresentation and abuse, distinctly thus disproves its identity with the Christianity of the New Testament.

This abuse has assumed various forms. Sometimes it has taken the form of this assertion: ‘We are free from the law. “Where there is no law, there is no transgression.” What may be sin to other men, is no sin to us. “There is no condemnation to us.” God sees no sin in us.’ At other times it has embodied itself in the assertion: ‘“The Spirit dwells in us.” We walk according to the Spirit. They who want the Spirit may need the law; but we are a law to ourselves. We need only to follow the Spirit, and we are sure all will be right. The law is not for righteous men like us. We do not require the law as a guide to our con-

¹ Rom. vii. 4, 6, viii. 1, x. 4, vi. 15; Gal. iii. 13, ii. 19, v. 18.

² Rom. vi. 1.

duct.' But whatever form it assumes, this is its general character: it is using Christian liberty as a cloak for wickedness.

It requires very little consideration to perceive that this is a gross abuse of the doctrine of Christian liberty. We have seen that the Christian's liberty in reference to God consists chiefly in two things: deliverance from the condemning sentence of the law, which we have violated, and the curse which we have incurred; and deliverance from a slavish temper in reference to God and his law. No human ingenuity will ever be able to show that either or both of these imply a release from an obligation to conform ourselves to the will of God, as made known to us in his law. On the contrary, both are necessary, in order to our yielding an enlightened, cheerful, and therefore acceptable obedience to that law; both are intended to produce this blessed result; and in every case where these two species of liberty are really enjoyed, they actually do produce it, in the degree in which they are enjoyed.

Indeed, a release from obligation to obey the divine law is in the nature of things impossible, except on one or other of the following suppositions,—that God ceases to be what he is, an absolutely perfect being; or that man ceases to be what he is, a rational being: for the law is nothing else but an expression of the duties which arise out of the relations which subsist between God as the absolutely perfect being, and man as his rational creature. Were God to become unwise, unholy, unjust, unmerciful, his law might, must change: were man to sink into the state of an idiot or a brute, he would cease to be the subject of the divine law. On no other supposition can man's obligation to the divine law be altered or destroyed.¹

¹ “ *Without law, or altogether above the law, man can never be, for the law is the expression of the divine essence itself.*”—OLSHAUSEN. “The

Were the thing possible, it would be the most dreadful calamity which could befall him in reference to whom it took place ; for the law of God is just a statement of the direct and only way to improvement and happiness. The person released from an obligation to regulate himself by it, is a person at liberty to make himself and others as miserable as the caprices of his humour may suggest, or the extent of his power permit. And what sort of a world would it be, if all men, or any large portion of men, were as fully relieved from responsibility, and the sense of responsibility, as idiots or madmen are ; if selfishness, unchecked by remorse or religious fear, were permitted to guide and direct the activities of men possessed of reason ?¹

The truth on this subject has been so well stated by an old divine, that I offer no apology for making a considerable citation from his writings : “ Not to wade far into a controversy, in which many have drowned their reason and their faith, it shall suffice to propound one distinction, which, if well heeded and rightly applied, will clear the whole point concerning the abrogation and obligation of the moral law under the New Testament, and cut off many needless curiosities which lead men into error. The law, then, may be considered either as a rule or as a covenant. Christ hath freed all believers from the rigour and curse of the law considered as a covenant, but he hath not freed them from

Antinomian is in deep and palpable error while he dreams of the law being done away by the death of Christ. He might as well dream that the divine existence is done away by the death of Christ. No folly can be equal to his folly, no immorality can be compared with his turpitude, who turns the doctrine of salvation from sin into liberty to commit sin, and seeks by the death of Christ (and an impunity falsely deduced from it) to overturn that law, to establish which in its eternal and divine holiness Christ led a life of suffering, and died a shameful death.”—

DOUGLAS.

¹ See note C.

obedience to the law considered as a rule ; and all those scriptures that speak of the law as if it were abrogated or annulled, speak of it considered as a covenant. Those again that speak of the law as if it were still in force, take it considered as a rule. The law as a covenant is rigorous, and under that rigour we are not, if we be in Christ ; but the law as a rule is equal, and under that equity we still are, though we be in Christ. The law as a rule only showeth us what is good and evil, what we are to do, and what we are not to do (‘ He hath showed thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee’), without any condition annexed, either of reward if we observe it, or of punishment if we transgress it. But the law as a covenant exacteth perfect, punctual, and personal performance of everything that is contained therein, with a condition annexed of God’s acceptance and blessing if we perform it to the full, but of his wrath and curse on us if we fail in anything. Such was the law under which man was originally placed. But ‘ by reason of transgression, we having all broken that covenant, the law hath its work upon us ;’ it worketh wrath, it produceth punishment, and involveth us all in the curse ; so that by the covenant of the law ‘ no flesh living can be justified.’ Then cometh in Christ, who, subjecting himself for our sakes to the covenant of the law, first fulfilleth it in his own person, but in our behalf, as our surety, and then disannulleth it ; and instead thereof establisheth a better covenant, even the covenant of grace ; so that now as many as believe are free from the covenant of the law, and from the curse of the law, and set under a covenant of grace, and under promises of grace.

“ There is a translation, then, of the covenant ; but what is all this to the rule ? That still is where it was ; even as the nature of good and evil is still the same as it was. And the law, considered as a rule, can no more be abolished or

changed than can the nature of good and evil be abolished or changed. It is our singular comfort, then, and the happiest part of our Christian liberty, that we are freed by Christ, and through faith in him, from the covenant and the curse of the law; but we must know that it is our privilege to remain subject to the law as a rule." God grants his law graciously; and "our duty, notwithstanding the liberty we have in Christ, is to frame our lives and conversation according to the rule of the law, which, if we shall neglect under the pretence of our Christian liberty, we must answer for both—both for neglect of our duty, and abusing our liberty."¹ We Christians are "not without law to God;" we are "under the law to Christ."

No man who really enjoys the liberty of the children of God, can abuse it as a cloak for wickedness; for, in his mind, freedom from the yoke of sin is indissolubly connected with submission to the authority of God. But in every age of the Church there have been bold, bad men, who have indulged unholy, Antinomian speculations, and, given up to strong delusions, have supposed themselves free while the slaves of sin—men,

"That bawl for freedom in their senseless mood,
And still revolt when truth would set them free;
Licence they mean when they cry liberty."²

Such were the men whom the apostle in his second epistle describes as "speaking great swelling words of vanity, and alluring, through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those who were clean escaped from them who live in error;" and of whom he says, "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage."³ Such men, too, were those of whom Luther complains, "Men who would be accounted good Christians

¹ Sanderson.

² Milton.

³ 2 Pet. ii. 18, 19.

merely because they rejected the authority of the Pope ; who will do nothing that either the magistrate or God would have them to do ; remaining in their old disorderly nature, however much they may make their boast of the gospel ;” and who, as Calvin says, “reckoned it a great part of Christian liberty that they might eat flesh on Fridays.”

There have been men, too, of a better sort, who, from a fondness for paradox and singularity, have adopted Antinomian language, while the saving truth, which is sanctifying truth, substantially held by them, preserved them in a great measure from corresponding dispositions and conduct. It is, however, of high importance, that on this, and indeed on every subject, we should learn to “speak the things that become sound doctrine,” that we employ “sound speech that cannot be condemned.”¹ And though happily in this country Antinomian tenets are in a great measure unknown, let every Christian remember that there are Antinomian tendencies in every human heart, so far as it is unrenewed ; and let him set himself to watch, to check, to mortify all such tendencies in his own heart ; and when the thought occurs, “May we not continue in sin, that grace may abound ?” let him meet it with the apostle’s strong disclaimer : “God forbid ! how shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein ?”² or by the plain, common-sense reflection, ‘It would be a strange way for a man to prove himself a freeman, by voluntarily becoming a slave to his worst enemy.’

(2.) *Cautions respecting the abuse of their liberty in reference to man.*

I remark, in the second place, that Christians must not use their liberty with respect to man as a cloak of wickedness. Christians may do this principally in two ways :

¹ Tit. ii. 1, 8.

² Rom. vi. 2.

by an unsober and an uncharitable use of Christian liberty; and by neglecting what is duty, and committing what is sin, under mistaken apprehensions of, or false pretences in reference to, Christian liberty.

Everything that is lawful in itself is not always expedient or proper in the circumstances in which we are placed. When it becomes inexpedient in my circumstances, it becomes unlawful for me. The Christian who acts on the principle that everything that is lawful in itself may be done at all times and in all circumstances, will often make his liberty a cloak of wickedness. My doing what, considered in itself, my conscience—it may be well informed—would not prevent me from doing, but by no means requires me to do, in circumstances in which I have reason to believe that it may prove a snare to myself, or that it will give offence in the New Testament sense of the word, that is, throw a stumbling-block in the way of a worse-informed brother, is a violation of the injunction which we are now considering. A Christian must never do what is unlawful, but it may sometimes be his duty to refrain from doing what is lawful. It has been justly remarked, that “scarce is there any one thing wherein the devil putteth a slur upon us more frequently, yea, and more dangerously too (because unsuspected by us), than in making us take the uttermost of our freedom in indifferent things. It therefore concerneth us so much the more to keep a sober watch over ourselves and our souls in the use of God’s good creatures, lest, even under the fair title and habit of Christian liberty, we yield ourselves up to a carnal licentiousness, or to a criminal uncharitableness.”¹

There never was a Christian more fully conscious of his liberty than the Apostle Paul, more sensible of its value, and more determined in maintaining it. Yet observe what

¹ Sanderson.

he says on this subject: "Let no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil to that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he who condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. We then who are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for good to edification. Take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them who are weak."¹ The rule in reference to matters which conscience permits, but does not enjoin, is, "Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God. Please all men in all things, seeking not your own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved."²

Happy is the Christian who, like Paul, knowing and feeling that he is free from all, and determined not to be brought under the power of any, yet, like him, thus becomes the servant of all, that by all means he may save some. It was an excellent saying of Luther's: "Be free in everything by faith. Be a servant in everything by charity."

¹ Rom. xiv. 13—xv. 2.

² 1 Cor. x. 32, 33.

We should know and be fully persuaded with the persuasion of faith, that "all things are lawful;" and yet we should purpose, and be fully resolved, for charity's sake, to forbear the use of many things, if we find them inexpedient. He that will have his own way in everything, in itself indifferent, whosoever may take offence at it, makes his liberty but a cloak of wickedness by using it uncharitably.

But there is still a worse mode of using our liberty in reference to man as a cloak of wickedness. Christian liberty has not unfrequently been made a cloak of wickedness, by being pleaded as a reason for transgressing the laws, neglecting the duties, and disturbing the order of civil and domestic society. No man is the less, but rather the more, bound, in consequence of his being a Christian, to observe all the laws that regulate his civil and domestic relations, that are not inconsistent with the law of God. Nay, he whose free servant the Christian is, has commanded him to serve HIM in serving those who, by the arrangements of his providence, are his superiors. In everything that is not inconsistent with my duty to God, I, as a Christian, am bound to be "subject to the powers that be;" to "obey magistrates;" to "submit to every human institution for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well;" for this is the law of my Master in heaven. With the same exception, a Christian wife is bound to be "subject to her own husband, a Christian child to his parents, a Christian servant to his master; though in all these cases the civil or domestic superior should not be a Christian. My liberty as a Christian does not in the slightest degree relax the obligation of my civil or domestic obligations; and therefore, whenever the latter are violated under a pretence of the former, liberty is used as a cloak of wickedness. Christians should manifest their liberty in this matter, not by neglecting or

violating civil and domestic duties, but by the cheerfulness with which they perform them, showing that here, as in every other department of Christian duty, 'they serve God without fear,' they 'walk at liberty, keeping his commandments.'"

The honour of Christianity is very much concerned in Christians avoiding every approach to thus making their liberty a cloak of wickedness. This is very obvious from the language of the apostle: "Let as many servants as are under the yoke," that is, as are slaves, "count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren (because, as Christians, the servant and the master are on the same level); but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. If any teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds: from such withdraw thyself." "Exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things; that ye may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."¹ Our text, viewed in its connection, seems plainly to have a peculiar reference to the abuse of Christian liberty as an excuse for disobedience to civil rulers, exercising a malignant influence on the character and cause of Christianity. "Submit yourselves to every human institution for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well; for so," in this way, "it is the will of God, that ye with well-doing put to silence the ignorance

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 1-5; Tit. ii. 9, 10.

of foolish men ; as free, and not using your liberty as a cloak of wickedness."

(3.) *Cautions respecting the abuse of their liberty in reference to the powers and principles of evil.*

It only remains, on this part of the subject, that I remark, in the third place, that Christians must not use their liberty in reference to the powers and principles of evil as a cloak of wickedness. Christians must not say, 'Because we are delivered from the wicked one, therefore we may, without sin or danger, put ourselves in the way of his temptations : there is no need that we watch against his wiles, or resist his attacks.' This were to use their liberty as a cloak of wickedness. On the contrary, they are carefully to avoid whatever may naturally lead to a partial recovery of their enemy's power, and a corresponding loss of their freedom. When they find that anything, however innocent in itself, through his craft and their remaining depravity, becomes a temptation to sin, they ought to abandon it. "Better it is by voluntary abstinence to part with some of our liberty as to God's creatures, than by voluntary transgression to become the devil's captives."¹ Their duty is distinctly stated by the apostle in these striking words: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take to yourselves the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness ; and your feet shod with the preparation

¹ Sanderson.

of the gospel of peace ; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God : praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." "Be sober, be vigilant ; because your enemy the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour : whom resist stedfast in the faith."¹

Christians must not say, 'Because we have obtained emancipation from sin that dwells in us, because we know and are sure that this enemy shall not have dominion over us ; for we are not under law, but under grace ; therefore we need not be constantly engaged in an active warfare with conquered foes.' This is an obvious abuse of Christian liberty. The true use of Christian liberty in this respect is pointed out by the apostle in such passages as the following, which, though already quoted, we think it well to repeat : "Reckon ye yourselves dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ," *i.e.* reckon yourselves spiritually free. What then ? have you nothing to do but to sit down and enjoy your freedom ? No. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin : but yield yourselves unto God, as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you : for ye are not under the law, but under grace."² "We are risen with Christ," says the apostle. That is another figurative view of our spiritual freedom. Well, then, have we nothing to do but to congratulate ourselves on our felicity, and indolently enjoy it ? Ah, no. "Since ye are risen with Christ, set your

¹ Eph. vi. 11-18 ; 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.

² Rom. vi. 11-14.

affection on things above, not on things on the earth." Seek the things that are above, and heavenly. "Mortify your members which are on the earth." "Put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new man" with his deeds.¹

The grace of God towards his people, whom he has made free, is not expressed by placing them in a condition where no enemy can assail them; but in enabling them to make such a use of the liberty and power he has given them, as that, feeble though they be in themselves, they become "more than conquerors through him who loved them." If we would "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free," we must be constantly on the alert against "those who would again bring us into bondage." It is a good saying of the judicious Hooker, "It was not the meaning of our Lord and Saviour, in saying, 'Father, keep them in thy name,' that we should be careless in keeping ourselves. To our own safety, our own sedulity is required." And we must never bring into antagonism God's promises and his commands, our privileges and our duties. His promise enforces, not repeals, his law. Our privileges encourage and strengthen for duty, but by no means annul the obligation or diminish the importance of obedience.

§ 3. *The Christian's duty to act out his character "as the servant of God."*

We proceed now to the consideration of the third view of the Christian's duty, as corresponding to his condition. As in accordance to his condition as a condition of liberty, he is to act as free; so, in accordance with his condition as a condition of subjection, he is to act "as a servant of God."

Obedience, active and passive subjection to the will of God, as made known in his word and in his providential dispensations, forms the comprehensive duty of the Chris-

¹ Col. iii. 1-5.

tian as the servant of God. What lies at the foundation here, is a just apprehension and a habitual contemplation of those truths in reference to the character of God, and to our relation to him, which form the ground of our obligation to serve him, and a perception of which is necessary to our feeling this obligation. He who would act as a servant of God, must keep before his mind the infinite wisdom and righteousness of God, which make it absolutely impossible that either in the injunctions of his law, or in the dispensations of his providence, there should be anything unwise or unjust: he must keep before his mind the infinite benignity of God, which secures that "in keeping," and for keeping, "his commandments, there is a great reward;" that "all his paths, to them who keep his covenant, shall be mercy" as well as truth; and that "all things shall work together for good to them who love him:" he must keep before his mind the infinite power of God, by which he is able to carry fully into effect all the promises, however exceeding great and precious, which he has made to obedience, and all the threatenings, however dreadful, which he has uttered against disobedience: he must keep before his mind the infinite faithfulness of God, which makes it impossible that he should deny himself, and secures that, "though heaven and earth should pass away, not one iota or tittle shall pass," either from his promises or his threatenings, "till all be fulfilled."¹

The Christian must not only keep habitually before his mind those perfections of his Divine Master which are displayed in his word and providence, but also the relations he bears to this infinitely great, and excellent, and benignant being. He must remember that he is His creature, and his NEW creature; that all that he is that is good, is the work of his hand; that all that he has that is valuable, is the gift

¹ Ps. xix. 11, xxv. 10; Rom. viii. 28; Matt. v. 18.

of his common bounty or of his sovereign grace ; that both himself and all that he possesses is His property, in a far higher sense than anything can be the property of any creature ; and that to alienate them from the purpose for which he designed them, to employ them in a way different from, opposite to, that in which he has commanded them to be employed, is a crime, of which the basest fraud which can be committed by one fellow-creature on another, in whatever mutual relation they may stand, is but an imperfect shadow. It is this setting and keeping the Lord always before us in his essential excellences, and in his revealed relations, that forms the mind to those sentiments of supreme veneration, esteem, confidence, and love towards God, to that habitual sense of entire dependence on him, and of infinite obligation to him, which are necessary to lead us to “serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear ;” and, at the same time, to serve him without “the fear that has torment,” “in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives.”

Next in importance to our thus cultivating the principle of obedience, is our making ourselves acquainted with the rule of obedience. He who would act as the servant of God, must “not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” And in order to this, he must study the word of God, he must observe the providence of God, and he must seek the guidance of the Spirit of God. He must make himself well acquainted with those “Scriptures given by inspiration of God, which are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,” and by which the servant of God may be made “perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work.” He must let this word “dwell in him richly, in all wisdom,” that in all the variety of circumstances in which he may be placed, he may know what God would have him to do. He must

make the divine precepts the men of his counsel, and take them as "a lamp to his feet, and a light to his path."¹ There is no doing a master's will without knowing it.

In order to know our Divine Master's will, we must consider the operation of his hand, as well as attend to the declarations of his mouth: we must study the divine providence, in order to enable us wisely to apply the instructions of the divine word; we must learn to "hear the *rod*" as well as the *word*; and under a deep sense of our spiritual blindness, our tendency to overlook and misapprehend very plain intimations of the divine will both in his word and in his providence, and of our indisposition to comply with his will, even when we cannot help perceiving it, we must seek the good Spirit, who is promised to enlighten our darkness, and to rectify our obliquities. Believing that if any man lack wisdom, the knowledge of God's will, he should "ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not," we should in faith, "nothing doubting"—in the full assurance of faith—present these prayers: "Open mine eyes, that I may behold wonders out of thy law. Put thy Spirit within me. Write thy law on my heart; put it in my inward part. Hide not thy commandments from me. Teach me the way of thy statutes. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts. Order my steps in thy word."

Thus cultivating the principle of obedience, and studying the rule of obedience, Christians are to act as the servants of God, by exercising the principle and applying the rule in actual obedience, both active and passive. They are to regulate the whole outer and inner man according to the divine will. They are to "glorify God in their bodies and in their spirits, which are God's."

They are to "serve him with their spirits," believing, willing, loving, choosing, fearing, hoping, *according to his*

¹ Eph. v. 17; 2 Tim. iii. 16; Col. iii. 16; Ps. cxix. 105.

word. Those high things within, which no human, no created power can control, must be entirely subjected to the divine authority. When a Christian is acting in character as a servant of God, the answer to the question, Why do you account that true? is, God has said so; Why do you account that false? God has said so; Why do you will this? God has said it is right; Why do you choose that? God has said that it is good; Why do you fear that? God has interposed a prohibition or uttered a threatening respecting it; Why do you hope for that? God has promised it.

This internal obedience must be manifested in external obedience. The language of our conduct must be, "The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey:" we must "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly." We must serve him in the various appointed institutions of secret and public religion; "entering into our closets, shutting our doors on us, praying to our Father, who seeth in secret:" "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together," but "walking in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless;" and such of us as have families, saying with Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." But we must not suppose that it is only when we engage in strictly religious services that we are to act as the servants of God. His law of justice, truth, and love, is to regulate all our transactions with our fellow-men; and in performing our various relative duties, as superiors, inferiors, or equals, we are to do all "as to the Lord."

Our obedience to God as his servants is to be passive as well as active. It has been justly said, that obedience consists in the subjecting of a man's own will to the will of another. If that subjection be in something to be done, it is active obedience: if it be in something to be suffered, it is passive obedience. Now, as God's servants, we must not

only do, but suffer his will. And we must show our passive obedience by being contented with his allotments, and by being submissive to his chastisements. It is meet that the servant of so great and wise and good a Master should be satisfied with the place in the family he assigns him, with the kind and degree of work he allots him, with the kind and measure of food, support, and wages he gives him. We are not acting like the servants of God, when we grudge and murmur at his appointments, and envy those to whom he may have assigned a higher place and more abundant accommodations. In such a case we ought to say, "Should it be altogether according to my mind?" "Has he not a right to do what he wills with his own?" It is not for God's servant to choose out the lot of his inheritance. It is in better hands. We must never say, never think, that he is a hard master. "Having food and raiment," however scanty and coarse, we should "be content,"—"content with present things." We should learn of that old and experienced servant of God, the Apostle Paul, what the good Spirit had taught him: "in whatsoever state we are, therewith to be content." Our passive obedience as God's servants is to be shown in our patience as well as in our contentment. What servant is there whom the great Master does not require to chasten? "He does not afflict willingly." It is always for our fault,—such is his justice; and such is his goodness, it is always for our profit. We certainly do not act like well-informed and well-dispositioned servants, if we do not take patiently, cheerfully, thankfully, those afflictions which we deserve, which we need, and which the great Master not only means for our good, but will make effectual for the purpose for which he intends them—the making us "partakers of his holiness." Such is a hasty sketch of that obedience which, as servants of God, Christians owe to their Divine Master.

It may serve a good purpose to notice some of the characteristic marks by which the obedience of Christians, as servants of God, ought to be, and indeed is, distinguished from what is not unfrequently mistaken for it.¹ There are particularly four characteristics to which I wish to turn your attention. In order to act as the servant of God, the Christian's obedience must be implicit, impartial, cheerful, and persevering. Let me say a word or two in illustration of each of these. If we would act as the servants of God, our obedience must be implicit. We must do what God bids us do, because God bids us do it. There are many who do many things which God commands, who never obey God. The doing what God commands may be agreeable to my inclination, or conducive to my interest; and if on these grounds I do it, I serve myself, not God. What God commands may be commanded by those whose authority I acknowledge, and whose favour I wish to secure; if I do it on these grounds, I am man's servant, not God's servant. I serve God only when I do what he bids me, because he bids me. Everything he bids me do is right, and ought to be done for its own sake. Everything he bids me do is fitted to promote my happiness, and ought to be done on this account; but it is only so far as I do it for the Lord's sake that it is obedience. God is the only being in the universe that deserves to be implicitly obeyed. I act like a fool when I believe what the wisest and best man in the world tells me, when I do what the wisest and best man in the world bids me do, if he do not give me a satisfactory reason for it: but I act like a wise man when I believe what God tells me, and do what God bids me, though I have no other reason but that he tells me, and that he bids me;

¹ These characteristics are noticed Disc. v. P. i. § 1, pp. 114, 115, vol. i.; but as the illustration here would be imperfect without a reference to them, I have, at the risk of appearing "actum agere," introduced them again.

for there can be no stronger proof of the truth of a proposition than that the omniscient and infinitely faithful One utters it—no stronger proof that an action is right, than that the infinitely wise and righteous Governor of the world has commanded it. The temper of the servant of God is expressed in these words, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth:” he listens; he listens to understand, and to understand that he may obey. “I will hear,” listen to, believe, obey, “what God the Lord will speak.”

If we would act as the servants of God, our obedience must be impartial as well as implicit. It will be impartial if it be implicit. There are too many who profess to be Christians, who are partial in the law of the Lord. To use a familiar but expressive phrase, they “pick and choose” among his commandments. They do *this*, but they leave *that*, which is commanded with equal explicitness, undone. In every case of this kind it is plain that the soul of true obedience is wanting. If I do anything just because God commands it (and unless I do this, I do not obey God at all), I will do whatever he commands me. Instead of thinking, as some seem to do, that their strictness with regard to certain portions of commanded duty will be sustained as an excuse for their neglect or violation of other parts of commanded duty, I will account God’s commandments concerning all things to be right, and I will abhor every wicked way. “Ye are my friends,” says our Lord; ye are my servants, says his Father, our Father—his God, our God—“if ye do,” not some things that I command you, not many things that I command you, but “whatsoever I command you.”

If we would act as the servants of God, our obedience must be cheerful. It must be obedience from the heart. “God is a Spirit,” and he who would serve him must serve him with his spirit. Mere bodily service profits nothing. And not only must there be spirit in the service, there must

be a free spirit ; not the spirit of bondage, but the spirit of adoption. It must not be the spirit of fear, but of love. There are men who do many things from the fear of punishment. The external service of God (and with them there is, there can be, nothing but external service) is very irksome ; but then they hope, by submitting to this penance, to escape the still more painful sufferings of a future state. It is otherwise with the Christian. His language is, "Truly, O Lord, I am thy servant ; thou hast loosed my bonds. I walk at liberty, keeping thy commandments. Thy commandments are not grievous. In keeping thy commandments there is great reward. I will be thy servant for ever."

This leads me to remark, that if we would act as the servants of God, our obedience must be persevering. God's servants are not hired servants, engaged for a term of years. They are bought with the blood of his Son ; and they are to serve him not only on earth, but even in the better world they are to "serve him day and night in his temple," and to "go no more out." The promise is, "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." The command with promise is, "Be faithful to death, and I will give you the crown of life." The perfections of the Master's character, and the relations he bears to us, out of which grows our condition as his sons, never change. He always continues our Lord, we must always continue his servants.

There is still another important view of the Christian's duty suggested by his being required to be "as a servant of God," to which I wish shortly to call your attention before leaving this part of the subject. Every Christian should consider himself as engaged in a work committed to him by God, to the right management of which all his time, talents, property, and influence are to be devoted, and a work to be carried on as under God's eye, and of which an account must be given before his tribunal. "No

Christian liveth to himself, no Christian dieth to himself. Whether he live, he lives to the Lord ; and whether he die, he dies to the Lord ; living and dying, he is the Lord's."¹ When a man becomes a Christian, he is called into the vineyard of the Lord, and his work is assigned him ; or, to vary the figure, he is entrusted with so many talents, and required to occupy them till the Lord come.² He is not here to obtain pleasure, honour, or wealth for himself. His business is to "seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness ;" to promote in himself and around him that kingdom which is not of this world, "which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."³ Like his Lord, then, whose "meat it was to do the will of his Father who sent him, and to finish his work," he should continually be about his Master's business, "as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye," remembering that yet a little while, and he will call his stewards to give an account of their stewardship, and "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." The Christian should always act as if these words were sounding in his ears : "Every man's work must be made manifest. The day shall declare it. It shall be revealed by fire. The fire shall try every man's work."⁴ Happy is that man whose work shall stand the trial, and abide ! He shall receive a great reward.

So much for the illustration of that view of the Christian's duty which corresponds to his condition considered as one of subjection. It is to act "as the servant of God."

The motives which urge Christians to the performance of this duty are numerous and powerful. The service of God is in the highest degree reasonable, pleasant, honourable, and advantageous.

¹ Rom. xiv. 7, 8.

³ Matt. vi. 33 ; Rom. xiv. 17.

² Luke xix. 13.

⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 13, 14.

It is a most reasonable thing that Christians should act as the servants of God. It is most reasonable that all men should serve God. A disobedient creature is a moral monster. Can anything be more reasonable, than that the will of the all-wise and thrice holy and infinitely benignant Jehovah should be the rule of the conduct of his creatures? All that men are and have is the gift of God. He gives them their existence, and all their faculties of reason, and action, and enjoyment. "In him they live, and move, and have their being." It is his sun which warms them; his air which they breathe; his flax and wool which clothe them; his corn, and wine, and oil, which support them. It is his Spirit which gives them understanding. He gives them life and favour, and his visitation preserves their spirits; and far, infinitely far, above these manifestations of kindness, he has, for the great love wherewith he loved our fallen race, given his Son, "that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life;" and is ready with him to bestow on the guiltiest of the guilty believing on him, "all heavenly and spiritual blessings." Surely, if it be reasonable to be just, if it be reasonable to be grateful, all men should serve God. But besides these powerful reasons why all men should serve God, very strong additional ones urge Christians to this duty. They have been put in possession of the blessings of the Christian salvation. "In Christ they have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of *His* grace." The very design of this redemption is, "that they may serve God." "Christ gave himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify them unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."¹ Is it reasonable that the great design of the death of the Son of God should be obstructed?

¹ Tit. ii. 14.

They have had the Holy Spirit in his enlightening, sanctifying, and consoling influences bestowed on them. God has given them "one heart," and put "a new spirit within them; and has taken the stony heart out of their flesh, and has given them a heart of flesh." For what end? "That they may walk in his statutes, and keep his ordinances, and do them."¹ And is it not reasonable that the great design of the gift of the Spirit should be accomplished? It is surely right that the great object of their deliverance from the hands of their enemies should be attained; and that is, that they may "serve God in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of their lives." Still further, they have, in the free exercise of their own choice, devoted themselves to God's service. They have said each of them, "I am the Lord's; I am thy servant; thou hast loosed my bonds. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people."² And is it not reasonable that these obligations, so freely incurred, so solemnly acknowledged, should be discharged?

But, in the second place, the service of God is in the highest degree pleasant. "His yoke is easy, and his burden is light." "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." "In keeping God's commandments there is great reward." "His commandments are not grievous."³ It is difficult to convince an unconverted man of this. Indeed, he must become a converted man before he can have personal experimental evidence of these truths. But every converted man knows that it is so. The following is a true as well as a beautiful picture: "Behold that servant of the Lord: he is just rising from his knees, where he has been saying to his heavenly Master, 'Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, according to thy word. Thou art good, and

¹ Ezek. xi. 19, 20.

² Isa. xliv. 5; Ps. cxvi. 16, 18.

³ Matt. xi. 30; Ps. xix. 11; 1 John v. 3.

dost good ; teach me thy statutes.’¹ Take him aside, and converse with him. Ask him if the service of God is not a delightful one ? his answer is, ‘I love his commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold ; and I delight myself in his commandments, which I love.’² But you are often in heaviness ? ‘Yes ; but my sorrow shall be turned into joy. The tears of penitential regret and patient suffering are sweet : and I am never happier than when, with a broken and contrite heart, “I turn my feet unto his testimonies.”’³ But the world frowns on you ? ‘What then : God smiles on me ; he lifts up the light of his countenance on me. I have peace—peace which the world cannot give, and cannot take away. Heaven is my home ; death is my friend. Providence manages all my affairs. My Master in heaven cares for me, and I am “anxious for nothing.”’ But your happiness is all in prospect ? ‘Oh no ! I have “the earnest of the inheritance ;” I have a “peace that passeth all understanding ;” he is faithful who says, “Great peace have they who love my law.” I “joy in God ;” I find it good to draw near to him. “His statutes are my song in the house of my pilgrimage.” It was once otherwise ; I once thought that to be God’s servant was to be a slave ; what I then thought freedom I now see to be most debasing slavery, and I find that his service is true freedom.’ ‘O taste and see that the Lord is good ; blessed is the man that trusteth in him.’”⁴

In the third place, the service of God is highly honourable. Men count it an honour to serve kings and princes. But what is the honour of being prime minister to the greatest of earthly monarchs, compared with the honour of

¹ Ps. cxix. 65.

² Ps. cxix. 47.

³ Ps. cxix. 59.

⁴ Eph. i. 14 ; Ps. cxix. 165, 54, xxxiv. 8. The picture here sketched is more fully delineated by Mr Jay, in his sermon entitled “Neutrality in Religion Exposed.”—*Sermons*, vol. ii. pp. 337-8.

being the servants of the Most High God, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords? It is well said by an apocryphal writer, 'It is a great glory to follow the Lord.'¹ The highest angel in heaven counts this *his* highest honour. The office is honourable, and the discharge of its duties secures honour from him who is the fountain of all honour—obtains the approbation of him whose good opinion is of infinitely more value than the applause of the whole universe of created intelligent beings. "Them that honour me," says Jehovah, "I will honour." "If any man serve me," says our Lord, "him will my Father honour." How far elevated above all earthly honour will the servant of the Lord stand on that day, when the King shall say to him, "Come to me, thou blessed one; well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"²

Finally, the service of God is in the highest degree advantageous. Our service of God can never merit anything from him. It is always imperfect and faulty; and even though it were not so, we should still be "unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do." We cannot be "profitable to God, as he that is wise is profitable to himself."³ We can lay Him under no obligation. But He has laid himself under obligations. He has promised that affectionate, sincere, persevering service shall not lose its reward. His command and promise to his servants is: "Be strong, and let not your hands be weak; for your work shall be rewarded."⁴ In illustrating the pleasantness of the service of God, we have seen that it brings its reward to a considerable degree along with it; but there remains "the recompense of reward" to be bestowed when the work is finished. Of that reward we can form but very inadequate ideas. "It doth not yet

¹ Wisd. xxiii. 28.

³ Job xxii. 2.

² John xii. 26; Matt. xxv. 21.

⁴ 2 Chron. xv. 7.

appear what we shall be." We may fairly conclude, however, from the language of Scripture, that "the reward of the inheritance" is incomparably superior not only to all we can enjoy, but to all we can conceive in the present state. It is "a crown of glory and of life;" an "enduring substance;" an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, unfading;" an "eternal weight of glory," "fulness of joy," "rivers of pleasure for evermore."¹ And this reward is not more valuable than secure, to all who act as the servants of God. "To them who, by a patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, he will render," as their gracious reward, "eternal life." "Faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it." "God is not a man, that he should lie; nor the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said it, and shall he not do it? hath he spoken it, and shall he not make it good?"² Surely, then, Christians ought to act as the servants of God. Constrained by the mercies of God, they should present themselves to him "a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is rational worship;" they should be "stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the service of God, knowing that their labours shall not be in vain in the Lord."³

These motives are directly addressed to those who are engaged in the service of God: their force will be perceived and acknowledged by them, and I trust under their influence they will become more diligent in the discharge of their honourable and delightful duties than ever. But what shall we say to those who are not free, or if free, are what the apostle terms "free from righteousness,"—who are not the servants of God, but the slaves of his and their

¹ Heb. xi. 26; Col. iii. 24; 1 John iii. 1; 1 Pet. v. 4; James i. 12; Heb. x. 34; 1 Pet. i. 4; 2 Cor. iv. 17; Ps. xvi. 11.

² Heb. x. 23; 1 Thess. v. 24; Num. xxiii. 19.

³ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

great enemy? We could say much of their degradation, and criminality, and wretchedness; but we prefer "proclaiming liberty to these captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are thus bound."¹ Fellow-sinners, we call your attention to the truth, "the word of the truth of the gospel." That truth, understood and believed, will make you free, free indeed; and that very truth which will loose the fetters of guilt and depravity, of Satan and sin, will bind on you the easy yoke, lay on you the light burden, of the divine service. Remaining in your present state, which you well know is far from a happy one, you will become more and more miserable throughout eternity. Unless you are released from the chains of condemnation and depravity, you must ere long, bound hand and foot, be cast into the prison of hell, whose adamantine gates open only inward. He whom you have chosen as your master, shall then be constituted your jailer and tormentor. "He opens not the house of his prisoners." The prey of the mighty shall not then be taken away, nor the captives of the terrible one be delivered. To his prisoners the glad-some sound, Go forth, will never come. Prisoners of hope! It comes now to you. It has come to you often, but you have lent a deaf ear to it. It comes to you once more, it may be only once more. May it not come in vain!

NOTE A. p. 1.

This verse is obviously not a complete sentence, and must be considered as connected either with what goes before, or with what follows, or with both. Its meaning and design cannot well be distinctly apprehended, unless this question respecting its construction be satisfactorily resolved. If it be considered as con-

¹ Isa. lxi. 1.

nected with what precedes it, then the words are descriptive of the manner in which the duty of submission, for the Lord's sake, to every human institution "for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them who do well, whether to the king or emperor, as supreme; or to governors, as to them sent by him"—*i.e.* to the institute of civil government, whatever its form may be—ought to be performed by Christians. It ought to be performed in a manner suitable to their condition, as at once a condition of freedom and of subjection; in a way becoming at once the glorious liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and that entire subjection to the mind and will of God which befits those who are His servants. It intimates that, "being set at liberty by Christ, they are not to enthrall themselves to any creature, however elevated; nor to submit to any human institution as slaves, as if the ordinance or institution itself, as a human ordinance and institution, did by any inherent power bind the conscience; but that, as the Lord's freemen, in a manner becoming so exalted a character, they should yield a cheerful subjection to the power of civil magistrates, and a ready obedience to their lawful commands, from a regard to the authority of Christ, the sole Lord of their conscience, requiring them so to do,—taking heed 'not to use their liberty for an occasion to the flesh,' not making that a cloak or excuse for disrespect or disobedience to their civil superiors: for though, in the highest sense of the term, they be not the servants of men, but of God, and therefore are not bound to obey any human command without a reference to the authority of God requiring them to do so; yet, on the ground of his command to be subject to the higher powers, they are bound to yield to them such honour and obedience as does not interfere with the supreme reverence and obedience which they owe to Him as the only Lord of the conscience."¹ This, from the punctuation adopted by our translators, seems to have been their view of the reference and meaning of the words. The whole passage, from the beginning of the 13th verse to the end of the first clause of the 17th, may be viewed as one sentence; in which case, the words of the 16th verse stand connected both with what goes before and with what follows. Thus, "Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every

¹ Sanderson.

ordinance of man for punishing evil-doers and rewarding those who do well, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors as to them who are sent by him (for so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye put to silence the ignorance of foolish men): as free, and not using your liberty as a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God, honour them all—all civil magistrates, whether supreme or subordinate." To the first mode of connecting the 16th verse it is an objection, that it seems an unnatural mode of concluding a sentence, and gives a very disjointed aspect to the whole period; and to the second, that the four injunctions in the 17th verse are so closely connected, that it seems improper to separate one of them from the rest. We are disposed, therefore, to consider the 16th verse as the commencement of a new sentence, which closes with the 17th.

NOTE B. p. 12.

The passage referred to, Rom. vi. 20, has received another interpretation. It has been supposed that *ἐλεύθεροι* here is used as if it were the participle *ἐλευθερωθέντες*, as it seems to be, ch. vii. 3, where *ἐλεύθερα* is obviously equivalent to *κατήργηται* in ver. 2. In this case *τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ* must be rendered "by righteousness;" and the words *ἐλεύθεροι ἦτε τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ* are the statement of the fact, the consequences of which are stated in ver. 22. This secures to *δικαιοσύνη* its ordinary meaning in the epistle; and the use of *ἀπό* in ver. 22 seems to intimate that another idea is meant to be conveyed there, than by the use of the dative without a preposition in ver. 20.

NOTE C. p. 43.

"When he was to do for us the part of a Redeemer, he was to redeem us from the curse of the law, not from the command of it; to save us from the wrath of God, not from his government. Had it been otherwise, so firm and indissoluble is the connection between our duty and our felicity, that the Sovereign Ruler had been eternally injured, and we not advantaged. Were we to have been set free from the preceptive obligation of God's holy law; then, most of all, from the most fundamental precept, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, soul, might, and mind.' Had this been redemption, which supposes only

what is evil and hurtful as that we are to be redeemed from; this were a strange sort of self-repugnant redemption, not from sin and misery, but from our duty and felicity. This were so to be redeemed as to be still lost, and every way lost, both to God and to ourselves for ever. Redeemed from loving God! What a monstrous thought! Redeemed from what is the great, active, and fruitive principle—the source of obedience and blessedness—the eternal spring, even in the heavenly state, of adoration and fruition! This had been to legitimate everlasting enmity and rebellion against the blessed God, and to redeem us into an eternal hell of horror and misery to ourselves. This had been to cut off from the Supreme Ruler of the world for ever, so considerable a limb of his most rightful dominion; and to leave us as miserable as everlasting separation from the fountain of life and blessedness could make us.”—HOWE. “None can be exempted from this law, unless he will be banished from his own essence, and be excommunicated from human nature.”—CULVERWELL.

DISCOURSE XII.

A FOURFOLD VIEW OF THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS AS FREE, YET THE SERVANTS OF GOD.

“Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.”—
1 PER. ii. 17.

IN our last discourse, our attention was turned to the view which the preceding verse gives us of the condition and character of true Christians. Their *condition* is one both of liberty and of subjection: they are “free,” yet “the servants of God.” They are “free:” free in reference to God, both as to state and disposition; free in reference to man; free in reference to the powers and principles of evil: they are “the servants of God,” redeemed by the blood of his Son; formed by his Spirit to the character of servants, being made acquainted with his will, and disposed to do it; devoted by their own most free choice to his service, and actually engaged in that service; obeying his law, and promoting his cause. Their *duty*, when viewed generally, consists in acting in a manner suited to their condition, as a condition equally of freedom and subjection. They are to act “as free” in all the varied senses in which they enjoy the privilege of liberty, guarding against abusing that privilege in any of its forms, “as a cloak,” pretext, apology, or excuse for sin; and they are to act “as the servants of God,”—to cultivate the principle of obedience, habitually keeping in view those perfections of the divine character, and those relations which they bear to God, in which the

obligation to serve God originates, and the belief of which is the grand means which the Holy Spirit employs to fit and dispose us to recognise and discharge that obligation; to make themselves acquainted with the rule of obedience, carefully studying the word of God, observing the providence of God, and seeking the guidance of the Spirit of God; and to exercise this principle and apply this rule in actual obedience, both inward and outward, both active and passive.

To this general view of the Christian's duty, as an acting in conformity to his condition, the apostle adds a somewhat more detailed and particular account, for the purpose of illustration. In the words before us, he specifies four different ways in which Christians are to conduct themselves "as free," and yet "as the servants of God." They are to "honour all men;" they are to "love the brotherhood;" they are to "fear God;" they are to "honour the king." Let us now proceed to inquire into the meaning of these divine injunctions, and into the motives which urge to a cheerful compliance with them. And while we do so, may God give us the understanding mind and the obedient heart! May He "open our understandings," to understand this portion of "Scripture given by inspiration of God," that we may become wiser; and open our hearts to love it, that it may be the effectual means of making us better as well as wiser; giving us clearer views of what is our duty, and a deeper impression of our obligations to discharge it!

"Here," as the good Archbishop remarks, "are no dark sentences to puzzle the understanding, nor large discourses and long periods to burden the memory. As the Divine Wisdom says of her instructions in the book of Proverbs, These precepts are all 'plain;' there is nothing 'froward or perverse,' nothing 'wreathed,' as it is in the margin, involved, distorted, perplexed, difficult, in them. And this

gives check to a double folly among men, contrary the one to the other, but both agreeing in mistaking and wronging the word of God. The one is, of those who despise the word, and that doctrine and preaching which is according to it, for its plainness and simplicity; the other, of those who complain of its difficulty and darkness. As for the first, they certainly do not apprehend the true end for which the word is designed, that is, to be the law of our life; and that it is mainly requisite in laws, that they be both brief and clear. It is our guide to light and happiness; and if that which ought to be our light were darkness, how great would that darkness be! It is true that there be dark and deep passages in Scripture for the exercise, yea for the humbling, yea for the amazing and astonishing, of the sharpest-sighted readers. But it argues much the pride and vanity of men's minds, when they busy themselves only in these, and throw aside altogether the most necessary, which are therefore the easiest and plainest truths in it, evidencing that they had rather be learned than holy, 'wise and good,' and have still more mind to 'the tree of knowledge' than to 'the tree of life.' In hearing the word, too many are still gaping after new notions, something to add to the stock of their speculative and discoursing knowledge, loathing the daily manna of such profitable exhortations, and 'requiring meat for their lust.' There is an intemperance of the mind as well as of the mouth. You would think it, and may be not spare to call it, a poor cold sermon, that was made up of such plain precepts as these: 'Honour all men: love the brotherhood: fear God: honour the king:' and yet this is the language of God. It is his way, this foolish despicable way, by which he guides and brings to heaven them that believe."

As to those who complain of the difficulties of Scripture, let them but believe and do what is perfectly level to the

apprehension of the simplest mind, and they will thus take the most probable means of arriving at just views of what is obscure ; for he is faithful who has promised, "If any man *will* do"—that is, be willing to do—"his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself ;" ¹ and at all events, he will soon and certainly find his way to that region where all difficulties are removed, all mysteries are unveiled, all obscurities are explained. There, in God's light, he shall see light ; no longer seeing "as through a glass darkly, but face to face ;" no longer knowing in part only, but knowing even as he is known. But to return to the illustration of the apostle's four comprehensive precepts.

I. CHRISTIANS ARE TO "HONOUR ALL MEN."

The first particular duty which he calls on Christians to perform "as free, and yet as the servants of God," is the honouring of all men. "Honour all men." To bring out the true and the full meaning of this important and very comprehensive precept of the Christian law, it is necessary to remark, that "all men" is here used in contrast with some men, and to inquire who are these some men referred to ; and in looking into the immediate context, we find two classes of men mentioned, to either or to both of whom the apostle may be considered as referring.

There are "the brotherhood"—that is, true Christians, "the chosen generation, the kingdom of priests, the holy nation, the peculiar people, the dwellers in light, the people of God." If the reference is to them, the sentiment contained in the words before us is : ' While "the saints, the excellent ones of the earth," ought to be the objects of your highest respect and honour, as well as affection, yet you are

¹ John vii. 17.

not warranted to regard unbelieving men with contempt because they do not belong to the Holy Society, are not "partakers of the benefit;" but, on the contrary, wherever, from civil or natural relation, or from intellectual endowments, or moral dispositions, they are the proper objects of respect, you are bound to render honour to whom honour is due.'

The brotherhood is not, however, the only class of men mentioned in the context. There are also "the men ordained for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well: the king as supreme, and the governors who are sent by him." These are to be honoured, all of them honoured, by being obeyed and submitted to. If the reference is to them, then the sentiment conveyed is: 'While magistrates are to be honoured in a manner suited to the nature and design of the office which they fill, no human being is to be despised. There is a respect due to every man, just because he is a man: there is an honour due to the king, but there is also an honour due to all men.' As the language of the apostle, without using undue violence, may be considered as suggesting both these important and closely connected sentiments, I will endeavour briefly to illustrate and enforce them in their order.

§ 1. *Honour not to be confined to the brotherhood, but rendered to all to whom it is due.*

The first principle which we consider, as suggested by the apostle's words, is, that the respectful regards of Christians are not to be confined "to the brotherhood," but are to be extended to unbelieving men, according to the claims which, from civil or natural relation, from intellectual endowments or moral dispositions, they may have on them. Honour is to be yielded to all to whom honour is due, though "aliens

from the commonwealth of" spiritual "Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise."

The injunction, viewed in this light, like the strikingly similar one, "Use not your liberty as a cloak of wickedness," seems, from the peculiar circumstances and previous habits of thought of many of the primitive Christians, to have been far from unnecessary. It seems plain that a very large proportion at least of those to whom this epistle was addressed, consisted of Jewish converts. The Jews were accustomed to consider their own nation as the chosen people of Jehovah, and on this account as worthy of the highest honour; while they regarded the Gentiles—the nations as they termed them, all the rest of mankind—with a malignant contempt, which its objects, in most instances, repaid with liberal interest. They generally considered all authority exercised by Gentiles over Jews as impious usurpation; and if they submitted to it, they did so "for wrath sake," not "for conscience sake;" not because obedience was in their estimation right, but because disobedience was found in their experience unsafe; not from a sense of duty, but from a fear of punishment. There was some hazard that these habits of thought and feeling, modified by their new circumstances and relations, might influence the Jewish converts: that they might regard the spiritual nation, of which they had become a part by believing, with sentiments similar to those with which they used to contemplate "Israel according to the flesh;" and might consider unbelievers, whether Jews or heathens, in a light corresponding to that in which they looked on the Gentiles in the days of their Judaism; and indeed, from various passages in the apostolic writings, it seems, to say the least, highly probable that this hazard was to some extent realized.

It was of importance, then, for the apostles distinctly to assert, that the new religious relations and duties of

Christians by no means unhinged their existing natural and civil relations, or interfered with the duties rising out of these, except by furnishing clearer directions for, and stronger motives to, their performance. Christian subjects are bound to honour heathen or Jewish magistrates. The command, when there were no magistrates that even professed Christianity, was, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. The powers that be are ordained by God."¹ "Submit to every human institution for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them who do well." Christian servants were to regard with the honour which finds its expression in cheerful, conscientious, uncomplaining obedience, their heathen masters. "Servants," says the apostle in the next verse, "be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward." And the Apostle Paul, speaking of masters not believing, says, "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed."² Christian wives were bound to honour their heathen husbands. The conjugal relation was not dissolved, nor its duties changed, by conversion to Christianity. The law is, "If the woman hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him;"³ and it is plainly to Christian wives in these circumstances that the commandment in the beginning of the third chapter of this epistle is addressed: "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear." Christian children were bound to honour heathen parents by providing for their support when necessary, and by "obeying them in the Lord;" that is, so far as their

¹ Rom. xiii. 1.² 1 Pet. ii. 18; 1 Tim. vi. 1.³ 1 Cor. vii. 13.

commands did not interfere with those of their Master in heaven.

On the same principle, wherever a Christian met with distinguished intellectual endowment or acquirement, extensive knowledge, remarkable wisdom, or with manifestations of integrity, public spirit, patriotism, benevolence, in unbelieving Jews or heathens, he was not to shut his mind against the admission that such intellectual and moral excellences did exist, nor his heart against the feeling of respect and honour which they are naturally fitted to awaken, because their owners did not belong to the Christian community. In such cases, though, so far as the display of moral qualities was concerned, they were, we believe, of very rare occurrence in the primitive age, Christians were to do full justice, and "render honour to whom honour was due." In yielding honour to heathens, corresponding to the natural and civil relations of society, they did honour to Him who established these relations; and in yielding honour to heathens corresponding to their intellectual and moral endowments, they did honour to Him who conferred these gifts.

The principle we have been illustrating is of universal application, and the precept grounded on it of permanent obligation. Christians of the present age are equally bound, with those of the primitive age, to "honour all men" in the sense in which we have explained these words. The circumstance that individuals, who from their natural or civil relation, or from their intellectual or moral qualities, have a claim on respect, are not Christians in the only proper sense of the term, though necessarily giving to that respect a different character from what it would naturally assume if they were Christians, ought to be felt by true Christians as a reason why they should be particularly careful in answering such a claim. They should act on the

principle, recommended to Christian wives by the apostle, to guide them in their conduct to their heathen husbands. In that readiness to acknowledge what deserves to be honoured wherever it is found, they may do much to remove prejudice, and to recommend Christianity to a favourable consideration ; and “ win, without the word,” those to whom there might be no opportunity of presenting the word, or who, if it were presented to them, would not listen to it.

Few things have injured the cause of genuine Christianity more, than a bigoted blindness on the part of some of its professors to the unquestionable claims to respect of various kinds, which some men possess, who, unhappily for themselves as well as the world, have neglected or resisted the evidence of the truth as it is in Jesus. Such men are deeply to be pitied ; they are in many cases greatly to be blamed ; in no case are they blameless ; but still their fault, their fatal fault, if persisted in, ought not to prevent us from honouring them for that which, in their station, or attainments, or character, or conduct, is really honourable. Those men who please themselves with the thought, that in despising these men they are showing their enlightened zeal for Christianity, are greatly mistaken. They are manifesting their own ignorant, ill-judging mind, and their wayward, ill-regulated temper. Their zeal is “ a cloak of maliciousness.” In the name of the religion of love, they are gratifying low and malignant feelings ; and if they are true Christians, they plainly in this case “ know not what spirit they are of.”

And surely if the law of Christ expressly requires honour to be given to men according to their rank, and endowments, and attainments, and character, though they are not Christians at all, its spirit must be very hostile to that petty, selfish, malignant temper, which, availing itself of the unnaturally divided state of Christ’s Church, leads those pos-

sessed by it to withhold honour from men the most distinguished for their talents, their worth, and their usefulness, and, it may be, to cherish towards them sentiments of bitter contempt, merely because they belong to a different section of the great body bearing the name of our common Lord, separated by barriers which exist only in their prejudiced minds from that to which they happen to be attached. Alas, how much has there been among Christian denominations of "biting and devouring" one another, and "smiting fellow-servants," who ought to have been "esteemed very highly in love for their work's sake!" How different from, how opposite to, the spirit of the injunction before us, "Honour all men," is this! Surely, if we are to honour all men who deserve honour, much more are we to honour all Christian men who deserve honour, though they follow not with us.

§ 2. *Honour not to be confined to classes, but extended to all men.*

But we apprehend the apostle's words not only suggest the principle, that the respectful regards of Christians are not to be confined to the brotherhood, but are to be extended to unbelieving men, according to the claims which, from natural or civil relation, or from intellectual endowments or moral dispositions, they may have on them: they appear to us to intimate another very important principle, that there is a respect due to every human being, and that it is a Christian duty to cherish that respect, and to act accordingly.

There is an honour which we owe to men, just because they are men: an honour of course due to all men, without exception and without distinction. That honour is not the honour of moral esteem. There are individuals, many individuals, that deserve to be approved and admired for their

moral qualities. Man, as God made him, deserved thus to be honoured; but the moral qualities which universally characterize mankind as a race, in their present state, are those which are the proper objects, not of approbation, but of disapprobation. What is the testimony of Him who knows what is in man? "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." In man—that is, "in his flesh," or man in his present fallen state—"there dwelleth no good thing." Fools, they say in their heart, "There is no God. They are corrupt; they have done abominable works; there is none that doeth good. The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues have they used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes."¹ This is what man is, what man has made himself,—the very reverse indeed of what God made him; yet what he is, and what he must continue to be, till God new-make him, "create him anew in Christ Jesus unto good works."

The foundation of the claim for honour to all men, as men, does not then consist in their moral state as exemplified in their conduct; that, in a rightly constituted mind, must call forth the sentiment of strong disapprobation, not unmingled with contempt,—disapprobation on account of its wickedness, contempt on account of its folly,—both of which are plainly immeasurable: it lies in their possession of a

¹ Gen. vi. 5; Ps. xiv. 1-3; Rom. iii. 13-18.

spiritual, rational, responsible, immortal nature. Every human being is, from the very constitution of his nature, of far more importance and dignity than a whole universe of inanimate matter, or even of irrational animated beings.¹ Every human being has the capacity of apprehending truth and its evidence,—of distinguishing what is true from what is false, and what is good from what is evil; every man has the faculty of knowing, loving, praising, serving, and enjoying God; every man is destined to an immortality of being. An eternity of ever-growing knowledge and holiness and happiness, or of ever-augmenting depravity and degradation and misery, is before every individual of our race. These faculties form the native nobility of every human being; and to think, and feel, and act, towards every human being as possessed of this nobility, is to honour all men, and to perform the duty enjoined in the text. And surely to despise the possessor of that for the loss of which the gain of the whole world could not compensate, however humble his rank, however low the degree of his civilisation, however limited his knowledge, ay, however depraved his character, is obviously at once irrational and immoral. The feeling such endowments should excite in their possessor, is mingled gratitude and fear; the feeling they should excite in others, that of solemn interest.²

The cultivation of an habitual reverence for man, as man, the noblest of the works of God in this region of his uni-

¹ "There is an indelible character of dignity engraven on the reasonable nature by the hand of God."—BATES. It is justly remarked by Neander, in his *Memorials of Christian Life*, that "the idea of a dignity belonging to man as man was unknown to the times that preceded Christianity." Horace's "Odi profanum vulgus et arceo" expresses the sentiment with which the cultivated regarded the great mass.

² Neander finely describes the feeling referred to as "a consciousness of the higher dignity of man's nature, in the oneness of the divine image in all."

verse, and, though fallen from his high estate, capable of, destined to, restoration to more than his pristine glory, is obviously of the greatest importance. It affords constant motive and gives right direction to our benevolent feelings and exertions in reference to our fellow-men. It impresses us with the thought, how much good, and how much good of the very highest kind, may be done, when such a being as *man* is the object of our benevolence. It leads us chiefly to think of, and provide for, and relieve, those wants and miseries which belong to him as the object of our reverence—his wants as an intelligent, responsible, religious, immortal being; and it at the same time guides us in the use of the means fitted to gain the desired end in reference to such a being, leading us to remember what, even by some persons not destitute of benevolence, seems often overlooked or forgotten, that in endeavouring to reclaim and relieve him, we must deal with him as a being who has reason, and conscience, and feeling, as well as ourselves; who may be reasoned or persuaded into a better mind, but cannot be scolded, or beaten, or bribed into it, and who must “give an account of himself to God.”

The want of this feeling has contributed in no limited degree to the production and permanence of some of the greatest social evils which prevail in the world. Had man had reverence for man, slavery with all its horrors could never have existed.¹ Every feeling like honouring our common nature must be extinct, before man can make property of his brother, can treat him as if he were not a person

¹ Misapprehension as to the higher nature common to all men, connected with the notion of different races originally of different degrees or even kinds of mental endowment, goes far to *account* for the prevalence of slavery among the civilised pagans.—ARISTOT. *Pol.* i. 2. A still more discreditable parentage must be found for the monstrous usage among self-called civilised Christians.

at all, but a thing, a portion of his goods and chattels. Had this sentiment prevailed, there would have been no murder; far less would there have been those wholesale legalized murders which civilised nations commit under the name of war. The notorious disgraceful fact never could have existed, that it is no uncommon thing for men not only outwardly to express, but inwardly to feel, more regard for some dog or horse they love, than for poor distressed partakers of their own nature; thus "reflecting," as Archbishop Leighton says, "at once dishonour on themselves and on mankind." It has been justly remarked, that "respect is the parent of kindness. From contempt to injury the transition is short and easy. He that despises human nature, wants only the opportunity to oppress man. The pride of man leads him to treat the sensitive nature that is beneath him as if it were so much inanimate matter. It is the feeling that they are so far beneath him, that induces him to be so careless of the sufferings of the lower creation, and just the more careless as they are inferior to his level. He scarcely thinks of moving in the slightest degree out of his way to save the reptile from pain, or mutilation, or death. And it is on the same principle that much, very much, of the oppression exercised and the injury inflicted by one class of men on another, is to be accounted for. Would so many rich men have oppressed their poorer brethren, ground their faces, and despised their cause; would so many rulers have wrested judgment, and crushed those whom they should have protected; would so many princes have spilt as in sport the blood of thousands, and made the murder of mankind a game; would so many tyrants have trampled on the neck of nations, and treated millions as made for one, had they honoured man,—had they considered that every human creature, whatever may be the meanness of his birth, the contractedness of his education,

the depth of his destitution, is an image of God, an heir of immortality, a being containing in him capacities of il-limitable improvement; a wonderful creature, who in its chrysalis state, under a humble form, conceals within his bosom wings which, if expanded, may carry him upward and onward in the pursuit of glory, honour, and immortality, for ever?"¹ It is because man does not honour man, that there is so much reason for the complaint—

“The natural bond
Of brotherhood is sever'd as the flax
That falls asunder at the touch of fire.
He finds his fellow guilty of a skin
Not colour'd like his own; and, having power
To enforce the wrong, for such a worthy cause
Dooms and devotes him as his lawful prey;
Chains him, and tasks him, and exacts his sweat
With stripes, that mercy, with a bleeding heart,
Weeps when she sees inflicted on a beast.”²

The prevalence of infidel opinions is deeply to be deprecated, for many reasons; and, among these reasons, its tendency to destroy man's reverence for man is by no means the least important. This has been put in a very striking point of view by Robert Hall, and I make no apology for laying the substance of his illustration before you: “The supposition that man is a moral and accountable being, destined to survive the stroke of death, and to live in a future world in a never-ending state of happiness or misery, makes him a creature of incomparably greater consequence than the opposite supposition. When we consider him as placed here by the Almighty Ruler in a state of probation, and that the present life is his period of trial, the first link in a vast and interminable chain which stretches into eternity, he assumes a dignified character in our eyes. Everything that relates to him becomes interesting; and to

¹ Joseph Fawcett.

² Cowper.

trifle with his happiness is felt to be the most unpardonable levity. On the opposite supposition, he is a contemptible creature, whose existence and happiness are insignificant. He is nothing more than an animal, distinguished from other animals merely by the vividness and multiplicity of his perceptions. He is entirely of the earth earthy, and his spirit, like those of his fellows, goes down to the earth. From these principles it is a fair inference, that to extinguish human life by the hand of violence, must be quite a different thing in the eyes of a sceptic from what it is in those of a Christian. With the sceptic it is merely the diverting the course of a little red fluid called blood; it is merely lessening by one the number of many millions of fugitive contemptible creatures. The Christian sees in the same event an accountable being cut off from a state of probation, and hurried, perhaps unprepared, into the presence of his Judge, to hear that final, that irrevocable sentence, which is to fix him for ever in an unalterable condition of felicity or of woe.”¹

Reverence for man is the great security for property, liberty, and life; and just views of man, as a responsible and immortal being, are the foundation of this reverence. Most justly as well as forcibly has the distinguished author referred to remarked, that “the speculations of atheistical philosophy matured, gave birth to a ferocity which converted the most polished people in Europe into a horde of assassins. Having been taught by them to consider mankind as little better than a nest of insects, in the fierce conflicts of party they trampled on them without pity, and extinguished them without remorse.”

Besides the obvious connection which the principle enjoined in the text has with the security and promotion of all the more important interests of society, there are other and

¹ *Modern Infidelity Considered.* Works, i. pp. 41-47.

most powerful motives which urge us to cultivate and exemplify it. To the question, Why should we honour all men? we have already given the reply, Because all men, viewed as rational, responsible, and immortal, deserve to be honoured; and because the honouring of men is necessary, in order to the attainment and security of the greatest amount of social happiness. We now add: we should honour all men; for God, the fountain of true honour, the best judge of what is to be honoured, honours men, honours all men. He has honoured them, in making them honourable in the possession of those capacities to which we have already referred. The eighth Psalm, whether descriptive of man in the primitive or of man in the millennial state, is a striking proof that God honours men. And in the place he has assigned them among his creatures on this earth, and in the arrangements of his providence, he takes kind notice of the whole race. He makes his sun to shine and his rain to descend on them all. "Have we not all one Father," and is he not a kind Father to us all? "Behold, God is mighty, yet he despiseth not any." He is "mindful" of our race, he "visits" man.¹

For reasons known only to himself, but necessarily most sufficient, he shows a respect to men which he did not show to angels. When men ruined themselves, he did not act as if their perdition would be a slight matter, an easily reparable loss. He was gracious to them, and said, "Deliver them from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." And their deliverer sent by him was not an angel, not the highest of angels, but his own Son; and that deliverance was obtained by nothing short of the sacrifice of the life of that Son. What an apparatus of means has he called into being for bringing this deliverance home to individual men,

¹ Ps. viii. 5-8, comp. Heb. ii. 6, etc.; Matt. v. 45; Mal. ii. 10; Job xxxvi. 5.

in the revelation of his word, the ordinances of his worship, the influence of his Spirit ! And these amazing dispensations are the result of love to the race, love to the world, the love of man ;¹ and the deliverance is not a deliverance for men of particular nations or particular ranks, but for men of every rank, every nation, Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian, male and female, bond and free.²

In his dealings with man he honours him, treating him in a way corresponding to his rational and moral nature. He does not act towards him as if he were a piece of inanimate matter, or a brute animal. He seeks to enlighten and convince his mind, and to engage his affections. He says, "Come now, and let us reason together." He employs "cords of a man, bands of love,"—arguments and motives fitted to his reason, and conscience, and heart, to draw him to himself, and bind him to his service.³

Jesus Christ, the only-begotten of God, honours man. He has taken into union with his divinity *man's* nature. He never so honoured angels : they count it an honour to call him Lord ; but man may, without presumption, call him Brother. "The Word of life," the living One who "was in the beginning with God," who was and is God, "became flesh." "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same ;" and in human nature he died for men, "the just in the room of the unjust," giving himself a "ransom for all," and bringing in an everlasting salvation—a salvation suited to all, needed by all, and to which all are invited, with an assurance that "whosoever believeth shall not perish, but have everlasting life." His command is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." It is his will that his salvation should be brought near "to every creature under

¹ John iii. 16 ; Tit. iii. 4. *φιλανθρωπία*.

² Job xxxiii. 24 ; Col. iii. 11.

³ Isa. i. 18 ; Hos. xi. 4.

heaven.”¹ Further, he carried human nature to heaven with him. A *man* sits on the throne of the universe; one who is not ashamed to call men brethren, and whom the most abject of the human race may call brother. This is the true dignity of human nature. “Human nature,” as an old divine forcibly remarks, “has become adorable as the true Shekinah, the everlasting palace of the supreme Majesty, wherein the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth bodily,—the most holy shrine of the Divinity, the orb of inaccessible light,—as this, and more than all this, if more could be expressed, or, if we could explain that text, ‘The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.’”²

It is obvious, then, that we cannot treat disrespectfully or contumeliously any human being without dishonouring God and his Son. “When a piece even of base metal is coined with the king’s stamp,” to use Bishop Sanderson’s illustration, “and made current by his edict, no man may henceforth presume either to refuse it in payment, or to abate the value of it: so God, having stamped his own image upon every man, and withal signified his blessed pleasure, how precious he would have him to be in our eyes and esteem, by express edict proclaiming, ‘At the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man: I require every man to be his brother’s keeper; for in the image of God made he man;’”³ we must look to answer it as a high contempt of that sacred Majesty, if we set any man at nought, or make less account of him than God would have us. The contumelious use of the image is in common construction ever understood as a dishonour meant to the prototype. The Romans, when they meant to set a mark of public disgrace or dishonour on any eminent person, did

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 18; 1 Tim. ii. 16; John iii. 6; Mark xvi. 15; Col. i. 23; Heb. ii. 11.

² Barrow.

³ Gen. ix. 5.

manifest their intention by throwing down, breaking, trampling upon, or doing some other like disgrace to their statues or pictures. And Solomon, in sundry places, interpreteth all acts of oppressing, mocking, or otherwise despising our neighbours, not without a strong reflection upon God himself, as leading to the contempt and dishonour of their Maker. 'He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth HIM hath mercy on the poor.' 'Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker.' And surely there is much force in this interrogation, 'Why settest thou at nought, not only thine own brother, but the brother of the Lord of glory?' Why despisest thou him for whom Christ died?"¹

There is indeed something revoltingly unnatural, something inconceivably mean and base, something grotesquely absurd, in a human being regarding with contempt any other human being. Surely the man who treats any man as a mean contemptible creature, should in a double sense be ashamed of *himself*; for what is HE but a *man*? How insignificant the distinction which elevates one man above another, in comparison of the distinction which elevates all men above the brutal tribes! How little does wealth, or rank, or even human learning, bulk in the eye of angels! How highly do they estimate reason, conscience, affection, capacity for being like God, immortality! The man who contemns any man, shows that he does not so much value himself because he is a man, but that whatever respect he has for human nature flows from its being his nature. How mean, how absurd, how thoroughly contemptible is pride! Surely "pride was not made for man, nor haughtiness of heart for him who is born of a woman."

The sentiment of honour for man, as man, which we have been illustrating and recommending, should manifest itself

¹ Prov. xiv. 31, xvii. 5; Rom. xiv. 10, 15.

in the whole of our conduct to our fellow-men, especially to those who in any respect may be our inferiors, whether in intellect, or talent, or acquirement, or moral worth, or rank, or wealth, leading us to "condescend to them that are of low estate:" but it takes its best form, when it leads us to use all the means in our power to raise our fellow-men in the scale of true honour and excellence; to rescue them from the influence of ignorance, and error, and superstition; to put down slavery, oppression, war, and misgovernment in all its endlessly varied forms; to make men free, intelligent, industrious, moral, religious, and happy, to the greatest attainable degree on earth; to save them from the shame and everlasting contempt which awaits unimproved advantages and unanswered responsibilities in eternity; and to secure to them that "glory, honour, and immortality," which, while it is "the gift of God through Jesus Christ," is to be sought for and obtained "in a constant continuance in well-doing."¹

Few things are better fitted at once to stimulate and to guide in such noble enterprises, than enlightened, impressive views of the true grandeur of human nature. While humbled to the dust with the overwhelming evidence, without us, within us, and around us, of the fearful degradation of human nature by sin, let us never forget what that nature was when God made it, what it is still capable of, what it still is when God makes it anew on earth, what it will be when he completes the work of transformation in heaven. Human nature was a stately beautiful fabric as God reared it. It is majestic even in ruins, exciting in every right constituted mind awe as well as sorrow.² As its desolations are repaired by the plastic powers of the divine Spirit, symmetry and beauty are seen developing themselves; and when, in the heaven of heavens, man stands

¹ Rom. vi. 23, 11, 7.

² See Note A.

forth, nearest of all created beings to Him who sits on the right hand of the Divine Majesty, bearing the image of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, then will it be felt by all intelligent beings, that human nature is indeed one of the “chief of the works of God,” one of the most wonderful results of divine wisdom and power and love.

Right views, equally of man’s meanness and his greatness, are to be obtained only by studying the representations which are contained in the divine word, an impressive abstract of which is contained in the following plain but striking stanzas :—

“ Lord ! what is man ? extremes how wide
In his mysterious nature join :
The flesh to worms and dust allied ;
The soul immortal and divine.
Divine at first—a holy flame,
Kindled by the Almighty’s breath—
Till, stain’d by sin, it soon became
The seat of darkness, strife, and death.

“ But Jesus—Oh ! amazing love !—
Assumed our nature as his own ;
Obey’d and suffer’d in our place,
Then took it with him to his throne.
Now what is man, when grace reveals
The virtue of a Saviour’s blood ?
Again a life divine he feels,
Despises earth, and walks with God.

“ And what, in yonder realms above,
Is ransom’d man ordain’d to be ?
With honour, holiness, and love,
No seraph more adorn’d than he.
Nearest the throne, and first in song,
Man shall his hallelujahs raise ;
While wond’ring angels round him throng,
And swell the chorus of his praise.”¹

¹ Olney Hymn.

He who believes this, he alone who believes this, will
 “honour all men.”

II. CHRISTIANS ARE TO “LOVE THE BROTHERHOOD.”

THE “BROTHERHOOD,” and OUR DUTY AS CHRISTIANS
 TOWARDS THE BROTHERHOOD: these are the two interest-
 ing topics to which our attention is now to be successively
 directed.

§ 1. *Of “the brotherhood.”*

A brotherhood is an association of brothers. Now, who are the brethren that are here referred to, and what is that association of them which is termed “the brotherhood?” It is scarcely necessary to say, that the language is not here used in its strictly literal signification—the signification in which John is termed the brother of James, and Andrew of Peter. In its analogical or figurative employment, which is manifold, it entirely overlooks the distinction of sex, and far overleaps the boundaries of families. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, male nor female,” here. It is usual in Scripture to speak of all the descendants of Jacob as brethren, and it is no uncommon thing to represent all human beings as brethren. The reason of this is obvious. With regard to their animal frames, they are all the descendants of the original pair, for “God has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth;” and with regard to their immortal minds, they are all “His offspring.” He is “the Father of spirits.” “In him we live, and move, and have our being.” Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?”¹ From our common human, and

¹ Gal. iii. 28; Col. iii. 11; Heb. xii. 9; Acts xvii. 26, 28; Mal. ii. 10.

our common divine paternity, we are all members of the same family ; we are all brethren.

On the footing of this common relation, mankind form a great variety of associations for a corresponding variety of objects, all of which, from what lies at their foundation, may be called brotherhoods. A nation is a great brotherhood. Municipal bodies, societies for promoting science, for diffusing knowledge, for relieving distress : all these are so many minor brotherhoods. To all mankind, as brethren, we owe a duty, and that duty is love ; and to all the brotherhoods, all the associations, of our human brethren, to which we belong, we likewise owe a duty, the fulfilment of which also is expressed in that all-comprehensive word, love ; and the manner in which this principle of love should manifest itself towards all our brethren of mankind individually, and towards all the particular brotherhoods with which we may be connected, and the motives which urge to the cultivation and exercise of this principle in all these various ways, would afford abundant materials for interesting and useful discussion.

But it cannot be reasonably doubted, that “the brotherhood” spoken of in our text is an association of men, not as men, but as Christians. “The brotherhood” to be loved, is placed in contrast with the “all men” who are to be honoured ; and therefore our appropriate employment, in this part of our discourse, is to inquire in what peculiar sense Christians are brethren, and what we are to understand by that brotherhood, that association of brethren, which ought to be the object of the love of all individual Christians.

It is obvious, from the Acts of the Apostles and the Apostolical Epistles, that “brethren” was the first name used to express the mutual relation of Christians to each other, as “disciples” was that employed to express their

common relation to their Lord. It was indeed the name given them by their Lord: "One," said he, "is your Master, and all ye are brethren."¹

The giving of this figurative appellation to Christians, rests on a wide and varied foundation. They are spiritual brethren, for they have a common origin. They are all "the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus." They all have "received the adoption of sons;" they all have entered into the kingdom of God, by being "born again, born of the Spirit, born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God,"—born, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." They all have Abraham for their father. "Being Christ's, they are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise;" and as they all are Abraham's spiritual children, they all are also the offspring of mystical Sarah,—the patriarchal church under the covenant of promise,—"the children not of the bond woman, but of the free." Ancient Jerusalem, "Jerusalem above," both as to time and place, "is the mother of them all."²

They are spiritual brethren, for they have a common character. They all, though in different degrees, resemble their Father in heaven, and their great Elder Brother. They all are "renewed after the image of him that created them," "in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness." They all "are conformed to the image of God's Son." They all already bear the spiritual, as they shall all ere long bear the outward image of "the Second Man, the Lord from heaven." They all have "the mind in them that was in him;" they all are "in the world as he was in the world,"

¹ Matt. xxiii. 8.

² Gal. iii. 26, iv. 5; John iii. 5, 6, i. 13; 1 Pet. i. 23; Gal. iii. 29, iv. 26.

—his animated images, his “living epistles, known and read of all men.”¹

They are spiritual brethren, for they have a common education. They are all nourished by the “sincere milk of the word.” In a higher sense than the Israelitish brethren, who were their prototypes, “they all eat the same spiritual meat, and they all drink the same spiritual drink:” “the flesh of the Son of man, which is meat indeed; the blood of the Son of man, which is drink indeed.” They all are taught by the same Spirit,—taught materially the same truths, so that the differences on vital subjects among true Christians are always rather apparent than real—differences rather about the meaning of words than the truth of principles; and they all are disciplined by the same paternal Providence, for “what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?”²

They are spiritual brethren, for they have a common residence. They dwell together in that spiritual “better country,” of which Canaan was an emblem, a state of favour and fellowship with God; and in that spiritual house, of which the temple was a type, “the Church of the living God.” They are “not strangers and foreigners” to one another; they are “fellow-citizens,” they belong to the one “household of God;” and they shall all dwell for ever in their “Father’s house of many mansions” above, “the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”³

Finally, they are spiritual brethren, for they have a common inheritance. “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus.” They all are “begotten again to a living hope, to an inheritance incorruptible,

¹ Col. iii. 10; Rom. viii. 29; Phil. ii. 5; 1 John iv. 17; 2 Cor. iii. 2.

² 1 Pet. ii. 2; 1 Cor. x. 3, 4; John vi. 55; Heb. xii. 7.

³ Eph. ii. 19; Ps. xci. 1; John xiv. 2; 2 Cor. v. 1.

undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them.”¹

Such are the brethren who are here referred to,—men brought out of their natural condition of guilt and condemnation, into a state of forgiveness and acceptance,—men “transformed” in their characters, “by the renewing of their minds,” in the exercise of the same divine grace, by the operation of the same divine influence; and thus, by these changes of state and character which are common to them all, materially the same in each, placed in a most intimate endearing relation to each other; with common views and affections, common likings and dislikings, common hopes and fears, common joys and sorrows, a common interest, common friends, common enemies, they are brothers indeed.

Relation and duty are correlative ideas, and the weight of obligation corresponds with the closeness of the connection. Those who are connected together as brethren, must be bound to feel towards one another, and to act towards one another, as brethren. The whole of the duty which one Christian brother owes to another Christian brother, to all other Christian brethren, is that which is here enjoined towards the brotherhood—Love. This duty is clearly described and powerfully enforced in the following apostolic injunction: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”² Christians are bound to love all men with a love of benevolence; but the love of esteem and complacency which a Christian ought to cherish towards a Christian, is a sentiment very different from this general

¹ Rom. viii. 17; 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

² 1 Pet. i. 22, 23.

benevolence,—a sentiment of which none but a Christian can be either the object or the subject. This affection originates in the possession of a peculiar mode of thinking and feeling, produced in the mind by the Holy Spirit, through the knowledge and belief of Christian truth, which naturally leads those who are thus distinguished to a sympathy of mind and heart, of thought and affection, with all who, under the same influence, have been led to entertain the same views and cherish the same dispositions. It has for its end the highest good, the spiritual improvement and final well-being of its objects, consisting in entire conformity to the mind and will of God, the unclouded sense of the divine favour, the uninterrupted enjoyment of the divine fellowship, the being with and like the ever-blessed, Holy, Holy, Holy One.

This subject, the duty of the brethren to the brethren individually considered, is a very interesting and important one; but the subject to which our attention is now to be turned, though nearly allied to it, is still a different one,—the love of the brethren to the brotherhood as a body.

The “brotherhood” is the brethren in an associated form, in a social capacity; and it is plainly necessary, in order to our distinctly apprehending the nature and extent of the duty here enjoined, that we clearly perceive what is its object. It is the more necessary that this be attended to, that mistaken apprehension as to what this brotherhood, or, in other words, what the Church of Christ is, has led into very important practical mistakes, and induced men, under the impression that they were loving and honouring the brotherhood, to hate and persecute the brethren. Men have often thought they were showing their regard to the Church by maltreating its true members.

It is impossible to read the New Testament carefully,

without perceiving that it is the intention of Jesus Christ, not only to render his followers individually holy and happy, as so many distinct children of God; but, in subordination to this end, to form them into a happy, holy fellowship, the bond of which should be the faith and love of the same truth, and the objects of which should be the united worship of their common God and Father, the united promotion of the honour and interests of their common Lord and Saviour, and their mutual improvement in the knowledge of Christian truth, the cultivation of Christian dispositions, the performance of Christian duty, and the enjoyment and diffusion of Christian happiness. This society, founded on Christ's institution, subject to his authority, regulated by his law, animated by his Spirit, devoted to his honour, and blessed by his presence, is the Christian Church. This is the brotherhood. None ought to be admitted into, or retained in this society, but those who, by an intelligent, consistent profession of the faith of the gospel, give evidence that they are brethren; and all who are brethren should readily join themselves to, and be readily welcomed by, the brotherhood.

This society, though one in its principles and objects, was necessarily from the beginning divided into separate associations, composed of the brethren residing in the same immediate vicinity, meeting together for the common observance of the Christian ordinances. These associations considered themselves each as a component part of the great brotherhood, "the Holy Catholic Church," "all who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus." The members of one of these brotherhoods were viewed, of course, as members of the great brotherhood, and were recognised as such by being readily admitted into fellowship in all the offices of religion by other Christian societies in other localities, on producing a satisfactory letter of attesta-

tion from the society with which they were more immediately connected.¹

Nor was this all. In joining the Christian brotherhood, they connected themselves not only with the whole of the brethren on earth, but also with those who had finished their course, and had been admitted into the mansions of celestial purity and rest. They joined the great family in heaven and in earth called by the one name; they “sat down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of their Father;” they came to “an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly, and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.”²

There are various important truths respecting the Church of Christ, suggested by its being termed a brotherhood, especially the two following, which I shall merely notice in passing. First, none but brethren ought to be admitted to be its members: an ungodly man is fully as much out of his place in a Christian church, as Satan was when he presented himself among the sons of God; and secondly, there must be no tyrannical rule in the Church of Christ. “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; but ye shall not be so. Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.”³

This goodly fellowship, this noble brotherhood, was not

¹ Rom. xvi. 1; 3 John 8, 9. “When a Christian entered a foreign city, his first inquiry was for the church (the brotherhood); and here he was received as a brother, and supplied with whatever could contribute to his spiritual or bodily refreshment. The church letters, which were as *tesserae hospitales*, received the name of *γράμματα τιτυπαιμένα*, *Epistolæ formatæ*, because, to guard against counterfeits, they were drawn up after a certain form, *τύπος*; and also *γράμματα κοινωνικά*, *Epistolæ communicatoriae*, inasmuch as they indicated that the bearers were in the fellowship of the church.” EUSEB. iv. 23. CYPRIAN, Epist. iii.—NEANDER, vol. i. sect. ii. p. 280.

² Eph. iii. 15; Matt. viii. 11; Heb. xii. 22, 23.

³ Luke xxii. 25.

only in its elements, but in its social capacity, its organized form, the fit object of the respectful ardent attachment of each of its members; and this respectful affectionate attachment was to be manifested in a corresponding course of conduct. Every Christian had a duty to discharge, the sum of which was, love to the Christian brotherhood with which he was connected, and to the whole Christian brotherhood, both on earth and in heaven; and it is to this, we apprehend, that the apostle refers, when, in the words before us, he calls on Christians to "love the brotherhood."

The Christian Church does not now, alas, exhibit, as it did in the primitive age, the appearance of one unbroken brotherhood. There are many societies who call themselves churches, and who sometimes take to themselves the name, as, if not their exclusive property, at least belonging to them with some peculiar emphasis of meaning, in whom we can scarcely trace the slightest identifying marks of the ancient Christian brotherhoods; though even among the adherents of these, we find not a few whom we gladly recognise as "faithful and beloved brethren in Christ Jesus." Here we have brethren, but not a brotherhood. In other cases we find both brethren and a brotherhood; but in too many instances we have to regret that additional humanly-devised bonds have been added to the divinely-appointed simple silken ties of primitive fellowship, and that, by attempting to carry union in opinion and uniformity of usage further than the great Master warrants, they have hazarded the continuance of union within, and prevented the recognition of other Christian brethren and other Christian brotherhoods, who are determined to "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free," and to count all terms of fellowship not of his establishing but various forms of "the yoke of bondage."¹

¹ Gal. v. 1.

Still, however, there are, under a very considerable variety of external form, many religious societies which, with all their defects and faults (and none of them want these), are in their elementary principles indeed Christian brotherhoods; and these Christian brotherhoods, substantially united, though in many respects different from, and in some even opposed to, one another, along with those individual Christian brethren who are in too great numbers to be found in connection with societies which are secular and antichristian in their constitution, form the whole Christian brotherhood now on earth.

§ 2. *Of the Christian's duty to the brotherhood.*

Now, in this department of the discourse, my object is briefly to inquire what is the duty of the individual Christian brother to this brotherhood,—both towards that one of its minor divisions with which he may be more immediately connected, and towards the whole brotherhood, the whole collection of Christian churches and Christian individuals whom he can recognise as forming the visible holy family, the children of God, the brethren of Jesus Christ, “the Holy Catholic Church.”

Let it not be forgotten, that it is the duty of a brother towards the brotherhood that I am inquiring into. It is the duty of every one who is not a brother to become a brother, of every man who is not a Christian to become a Christian; but till he does so, he had better not seek admission into the brotherhood. What has he who is not a brother to do there? It is a happy thing for all parties concerned, when “believers are added to the Church, multitudes both of men and women,” and when “of the rest,” the unbelieving remainder, “none dares to join himself to them.”¹

¹ Acts v. 13, 14.

The first way in which a Christian brother is to show his love for the brotherhood, as an institution or society, is by joining himself to it; and in order to do this, he must connect himself with some particular Christian brotherhood. It is in this way he forms a visible connection with the whole visible brotherhood. There are some good men who seem to be fond of being Christians at large, connected with the whole society invisibly, but visibly with no individual society. The sectarianism and impurity which are to be found, more or less, in all existing Christian churches, afford but too plausible an excuse, but they afford no sufficient reason, for this course. Of the great ends to be gained by connection with the Christian brotherhood, some cannot be gained at all, none of them gained in a high degree, without joining the fellowship of some particular church; and it is plain that, if all Christians were taking the same liberty as those privileged persons, there would be no such thing as a visible church on earth. As soon as Saul came to Jerusalem, "he assayed to join himself to the disciples." Both his eagerness and their caution are full of instructive example. They were backward to receive him, because "they doubted whether he was a disciple." And equally worthy of imitation are the conduct of Barnabas, who "took him and brought him to the apostles," and their ready reception of him on Barnabas' testimony, so that "he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem."¹

Having shown his love to the brotherhood by joining himself to it, the Christian brother is to give further proof of his love to it after he has become one of its members. He is to be regular in attending on all its meetings for the observance of ordinances. He is not to "forsake the assembling together, as the manner of some is;" he is to

¹ Acts ix. 26, 27.

“continue stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” All the members of the brotherhood are to show their love, by performing the duties belonging to the place they hold in the society. They are cheerfully to contribute of their time, and labour, and property, for gaining the great objects of the brotherhood, both within and without its pale: the overseers, by “watching for souls as those who must give account;” the members, by “obeying them that have the rule over them;” “the younger,” by obedience to the elder; and the whole body, by “submitting to each other in the fear of God.” “He that ministers, must wait on his ministering; he that teacheth, on teaching; he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, must do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.” “He who is taught the word is to communicate to them who teach in all good things.” The statute “which the Lord has ordained” must be observed, “that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel;” and they who, “for Christ’s sake, go forth, asking nothing of the Gentiles,” ought, by the other members of the society, to be “brought forward on their journey after a godly sort.” Love to the brotherhood is thus to be shown by contributing to the maintenance of those ordinances by which the highest interests of the society are promoted, and by which it is enabled to perform one of its principal duties, in “holding forth the word of life” to a world perishing for lack of knowledge.¹

Another way in which the Christian brother is to show his love to the brotherhood, is by endeavouring to preserve its purity. The introduction of corrupt members into the Church of Christ is not only great cruelty to the indivi-

¹ Heb. x. 25; Acts ii. 42; Heb. xiii. 17; 1 Pet. v. 5; Eph. v. 21; Rom. xii. 7, 8; Gal. vi. 6; 1 Cor. ix. 14; 3 John 6, 7; Phil. ii. 16.

duals immediately concerned, but it is inflicting a most severe injury on the brotherhood. It is in reference to this crime—for it is no less—that the apostle says, “If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy.” An unchristian man can do no good, he must do mischief, in a Christian church. “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”¹

It is peculiarly the duty of official Christians, elders and pastors, to show their love to the brotherhood by a careful attention to this matter. To them the command is given, “Let every man take heed how he buildeth” on the foundation. A Christian brotherhood will serve its peculiar purposes, both internal and external, just in proportion to its purity. A small Christian society, composed of right materials, will be far more powerful in doing good, than a large Christian society where the materials are of an inferior kind. It should, then, be the constant care of the rulers of every Christian brotherhood to admit none but those who appear to be Christians, and to retain none after they have proved themselves not to be Christians. But this will be, this can be, but very imperfectly done, if the members of the society generally do not give their assistance to the overseers or bishops, by watching for one another’s souls, “looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness spring up and trouble the brotherhood, and thereby many be defiled.” That man does not love the brotherhood, who does not conscientiously attend to our Lord’s directions in the eighteenth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, for the removal of offences.²

Still further, the brother is to show his love of the brotherhood by seeking its peace. No society can well gain its object whose members are at variance with one

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 17, v. 6.

² 1 Cor. iii. 10 ; Matt. xviii. 15-20.

another ; and when the nature and designs of the Christian brotherhood are considered, it must be plain, that to *its* prosperity peace is of peculiar importance. The “things which make for peace” are the things which edify the brotherhood. He who loves the brotherhood intelligently, will study “to be quiet, and to do his own business,” for he knows that the way to secure peace in any society is for every member to do his own business ; and there is not a more certain likelihood of producing discord, than for men to neglect their own business, and become “busybodies in other men’s matters.” He will not, like Diotrophes, “love,” and seek to have “the pre-eminence,” but “by love serve his brethren.” He will “avoid foolish questions, which gender strife rather than godly edifying.” He will “leave off contention before it be meddled with ;” and he will “mark those who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which he has learned, and avoid them.” He will be found a stedfast upholder of the three great laws of the brotherhood, on which its peace so much depends : “Let all things be done in charity ;” “let all things be done to edifying ;” “let all things be done decently and in order.”¹

In the next place, the brother is to show his love of the brotherhood by seeking its increase. Brethren die ; but the brotherhood is immortal. It is the part of a good church-member to exert himself to have the breaches made by death and otherwise repaired, and to prepare for the blank which his own removal is soon to make. This is not to be done by robbing other churches, by seeking to thin the ranks of some other brotherhood. There is something very unseemly in the proselytizing spirit which distinguishes too many Christian sects, and which marks them as sects

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 11 ; 1 Pet. iv. 15 ; 3 John 9 ; Gal. v. 13 ; 2 Tim. ii. 23 ; Tit. iii. 9 ; Prov. xvii. 14 ; Rom. xvi. 17 ; 1 Cor. xiv. 16, 26, 40.

indeed. If a member of one Christian brotherhood seek admission into another, bringing satisfactory evidence that he is a brother, he is not to be refused ; nor is Christian liberty even to seem to be trenched on by inquisitorial investigation—either on the part of the church left or the church joined—into the reasons which, he says, are satisfactory to his own conscience for the change ; but it is not the natural order of things to gather churches out of churches. Little is gained, and often much is lost, in this way.

Churches should be kept up by conversion rather than by proselytism ; and the love of the brotherhood is a principle which operates in entire harmony with the love of souls, in seeking to turn men from the error of their ways, that it may be said of them, “Ye were as sheep going astray ; but ye are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of souls.” Every converted man should endeavour to bring as many of the prodigal children home to his Father’s house as possible, that there may be joy in the brotherhood on earth as in heaven, that “those who were dead have become alive again, and those who were lost are found.”¹ The member of a Christian church who, in this way, is the means of adding even one member of the right kind to its communion, is a real and great benefactor both to the individual and to the community, both to the brother and to the brotherhood.

Finally, the Christian brother is to show his love to the brotherhood he is immediately connected with, by making its welfare, in all the extent of meaning belonging to that word, the subject of his frequent and fervent prayers. This was one of the ways in which the Apostle Paul, who had a great deal of the love of the brethren, as well as of love to all men, expressed his affection for the brotherhoods with which he was peculiarly connected. “Without ceasing he

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 25 ; Luke xv. 32.

made mention of them always in his prayers, for the grace of God to them, that they might in everything be enriched by him, and come behind in no gift; and that they might be perfectly joined together in the same mind and judgment." We, my brethren, should imitate his example, and, like him, when we "bow our knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," we should bear on our hearts the brotherhood, and pray that it may be made and preserved free, and pure, and peaceful, and active, and prosperous, and that "the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, may make increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."¹ It is thus that the Christian brother is to love the brotherhood of which he is a member.

But he is never to forget that that brotherhood,—ay, that that class of brotherhoods, however numerous, with which it may be connected in ecclesiastical arrangement,—is but a very small portion of the great Christian brotherhood, consisting as it does of all the associations which, whatever be their differences and faults, deserve the name of Christian churches, being collections of men honestly associated from a regard to Christ's authority, founded on the faith of his gospel, to observe his ordinances; and of all true believers, though they may not be in Christian fellowship, properly so called, whether standing aloof from all the sections of Christian churches, or connected with societies which we cannot recognise as Christian churches: and with regard to all these portions of "the household of faith," he is to love them, and "do good to them as he has opportunity."²

One of the best ways of showing love to the whole brotherhood, is by a careful discharge of our duty to the

¹ 1 Cor. i. 4, etc.; Eph. ii. 14, iv. 16.

² Gal. vi. 10.

particular brotherhood we are connected with. We shall do more, I believe, towards having our neighbours' vineyards well kept, by keeping well our own, by making it quite a pattern vineyard for order and freedom from weeds, and for fruitfulness, than by leaving our own vineyard untended, and occupying our time in pointing out their neglects and faults; thus ultroneously assuming the office of "keepers of other men's vineyards." It is impossible to say how extensively beneficial might be the influence of a single congregation, however small, all the members of which set themselves to do all that lies in their power, according to the stations they bear in it, that, in the quiet working of Christ's simple machinery, their brotherhood should do all the good possible within and without its pale. This, however, is by no means to interfere—it will not—with every legitimate means of obtaining freedom and purity, both as to doctrine and communion and order, for the whole brotherhood, and for breaking down "middle walls of partition," and hastening onward the fulfilment of the Saviour's prayer, in that visible union of his genuine followers, which will come on the world with the force of a demonstration that the Father hath sent his Son.¹

The duty of every brother to the whole brotherhood on earth, cannot be more succinctly and accurately stated than in the well-considered words of the Westminster Assembly: "All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his spirit and by faith, are united to one another in love, have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man. Saints by profession are bound to maintain a holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God; and in performing such spiritual services as

¹ John xvii. 23.

tend to their mutual edification, as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities ; which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended to all those who in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus.”¹

It is plain that the Westminster divines never contemplated anything similar to what has long existed in this country : different bodies of Christian churches holding the same doctrines, observing the same ordinances, and following the same order, occupying the same territorial region, yet living as distinct, so far as ecclesiastical communion is concerned, as if their creeds were contradictory, their institutions different, and their modes of government incompatible. Such an unnatural state of things does not seem to have entered into their minds. Their remarks refer to sister churches situated in different countries, or organized on different platforms, or to individual members of such sister churches. But, *a fortiori*, on the principles so well stated in the paragraph just quoted, churches in the circumstances described are bound not only to occasional communion and friendly co-operation, but to entire union, to ecclesiastical incorporation.²

With regard to the duties of Christian brethren and Christian brotherhoods to other Christian brotherhoods, with whom circumstances may prevent complete union, I beg briefly to observe, that it is the obvious duty of every Christian brother to love not only his own brotherhood, or rather his corner of the one great brotherhood ; but, without being blind to defects and faults, to cherish affectionate, respectful sentiments towards all Christian churches who hold the Head, and habitually to express these sentiments in fervent supplication to our One—common—Father, in the name of our One—common—Mediator, and under the

¹ *Westminst. Conf.*, ch. xxvi. secs. 1, 2.

² See note B.

influence of the One—common—Spirit, and, as occasion offers, gladly to embrace opportunities of promoting their internal improvement and outward prosperity; and what is true of Christian brethren is equally true of Christian brotherhoods. Especially should we use every means in our power towards the realization of that wide enlargement of the brotherhood, which prophecy leads us to anticipate as drawing near in these later ages of the world, when “all the ends of the earth shall remember, and turn to the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him;” when “the little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation;” when “the handful of corn sown on the top of the mountains shall shake like Lebanon;” when the mother of us all shall “enlarge the place of her tent, and stretch forth the curtain of her habitation: when she shall not spare, but lengthen her cords, and strengthen her stakes; for she shall break forth on the right hand and the left; and her seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited;” when “the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” Every lover of the brotherhood should express his love by adopting this resolution and acting it out: “For Zion’s sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, till the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth;” “Peace be within thy walls, prosperity be within thy palaces.” “God be merciful to us, and bless us; and cause thy face to shine on us. That thy way may be known upon earth, and thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.”¹

¹ Ps. xxii. 27; Isa. lx. 22; Ps. lxxii. 16; Isa. liv. 2; Rev. xi. 15; Isa. lxii. 1; Ps. cxxii. 6, 7, lxxvii. 1-3.

It only remains, on this part of the subject, that I say a word or two as to the love which we should cherish towards that part of the great brotherhood who are not on earth, but in heaven, and the manner in which we should express this love :—

“ One family we dwell in him,
One church, above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.”¹

The stroke of mortality has broken many a strong and tender band ; but it has not broken, it could not break, the band which binds Christian brother to Christian brother. We have no reason to think our brethren on high have forgotten us, or have ceased to love us. We know we have not forgotten them, nor ceased to love them. They stand in no need of our offices of kindness ; they are beyond the reach of imperfection, and want, and suffering ; but they are the proper objects of a very tender and ardent affection, —an affection which has more of the purity of heaven, and the permanence of eternity, than any other affection which has a fellow-creature for its object. That affection is surely not one that must live in the heart without ever finding appropriate expression in this world. Our love to our brethren in heaven is to be shown in our giving thanks to Him who loves them and us, for making them “ more than conquerors ;” in keeping steadily in our mind’s eye all that was excellent in their character and conduct, both for model and for motive ; in giving “ all diligence, to the full assurance of hope, that we may not be slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises ;” in maintaining stedfastly that good cause which was dearer to them than life when here, and which we know is dearer to them now than ever ; and in often practising

¹ Ch. Wesley.

the first notes of the ever new anthem, which, as sung by them, and to be sung by us, shall “everlastingly echo in heaven :” “Unto Him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in his blood. Salvation to our God and the Lamb for ever and ever.”¹

These remarks have been entirely addressed to the brethren. They alone could relish them ; they alone, indeed, could fully understand them. But is there any one here uninterested in them ? Not one. “Strangers, foreigners, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,” from “the household of faith,” there may be here ; but every one of these must become “brethren,” else they are undone for ever, for there is no salvation but by union to the Saviour—“the first-born among the many brethren.” We dare not say to such persons, Make a profession of brotherhood. No ; in your present circumstances this were but to accumulate guilt, to increase danger, to aggravate damnation. But we do say, Become brothers. The brethren with one voice of invitation say, “We were once like you, ‘far off ;’ but we have been ‘brought nigh.’” You, too, may be brought nigh by that all-attractive blood of Jesus’ cross. Are you very guilty, very depraved, very wretched ? So were some of us ; ay, so were all of us ; but “we have been washed, we have been sanctified, we have been justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” His blood is as efficacious, his Spirit as free, as ever. Oh, come to him, and then come to us ! Give yourselves to him, and then give yourselves to us by his will. Come to him : he will put you among the brethren ; he will not be ashamed to call you brethren ; he will give you the brother’s inheritance, the goodly land. Come to us, we will do you good ; we will love you as brethren,

¹ Heb. vi. 11, 12 ; Rev. i. 5, 6. Ἀγαπῶντι, not ἀγαπήσαντι, is the true reading.

and you will love us as brethren ; we will strengthen one another's hands, and comfort one another's hearts ; and move onwards and upwards, till we, one by one, join the goodly fellowship in heaven. And when God has filled up the number of his chosen ones, a number which no man can number, then shall the completed holy brotherhood be presented by their Elder Brother, "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing," to his Father and their Father, his God and their God, "with exceeding joy," to dwell for ever in "his presence, where there is fullness of joy," and "rivers of pleasure" for evermore. There will be no need then to press the exhortation, "Love the brotherhood." They will all of them be thoroughly "taught of God to love one another." "Come with us, and we will do you good ; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."¹

III. CHRISTIANS ARE TO "FEAR GOD."

Let us now, in the third place, turn our attention to the account here given us of our duty to God—we are to FEAR him : that is, we are to cherish an awful sense of his infinite grandeur and excellence, corresponding to the revelation he has made of these in his works and word, inducing a conviction that his favour is the greatest of all blessings, and his disapprobation the greatest of all evils, and manifesting itself in leading us practically to seek his favour as the chief good we can enjoy, and avoid his disapprobation as the most tremendous evil we can be subjected to. Such is the fear which the Christian man ought to cherish and manifest towards God.

The foundation of this fear of God is in God himself. The only way in which we can apprehend what this fear is,

¹ Num. x. 29-32.

and why we should cherish it, is by turning our minds to the contemplation of the venerable excellences of the divine character; and if we do distinctly perceive the truth and its evidence on this subject, not only will there be lodged in our understandings and consciences a conviction that we ought to fear God,—that this is the first and highest requirement of reason as well as of revelation,—but the sentiment will lay hold of our heart, and obtain a place in our affections, corresponding to our apprehensions of the truth and its evidence.

Everything about God is fitted to fill the mind with awe, and it would seem as if nothing short of insanity could prevent any being possessed of reason and affection from habitually feeling the sentiment of supreme veneration for Him. He is the unexhausted, inexhaustible fountain of all the being, all the life, all the intelligence, all the power, all the activity, all the excellence, all the happiness in the universe. He is “the first and the last, and the living One;” “from everlasting to everlasting;” immense, “filling heaven and earth” with his presence; “a God at hand, a God afar off;” unchanged, unchangeable, “without variable-ness or shadow of turning;” “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever:”—Infinite in power, having called into existence myriads of worlds, capable of calling into existence myriads more; upholding all these worlds, himself upheld by none; controlling all things, himself uncontrolled; “doing according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth:”—Infinite in knowledge: “known to God are all his works from the beginning of the world;”¹ “every creature is manifest in his sight;” “all things are naked and open in his eyes;” “hell itself is naked before him, and destruction has no covering:”—Infinite in wisdom: “wonderful in counsel,” as well as

¹ See note C.

“excellent in working ;” “ wise in heart,” as well as “mighty in strength ;” his “ judgments are unsearchable, his ways past finding out :”—Infinite in holiness : “ of purer eyes than to behold evil, and he cannot look on iniquity ;” the “ Holy, Holy, Holy” One :—Infinite in righteousness : “ he is the Rock, his work is perfect ; all his ways are judgment ; a God of truth, and without iniquity ; just and right is he ;”—“ far be it from him, that he should do wickedness ; and from the Almighty, that he should do iniquity : for the work of a man shall he render to him, and cause him to receive according to his ways ; yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.”¹ The benignity of the Divine Being may seem a quality fitted to excite love rather than fear, yet are there two qualities of it,—its immeasurable extent, and its immaculately holy character,—which are well fitted to deepen the impression of awe produced by his eternal, infinite, immutable power and wisdom and rectitude. “ There is mercy with him, and plenteous redemption ;” but the mercy that is with *him*, is mercy which leads men to fear him.² Such is the truth, stated in the plainest, most unadorned language, respecting God. But “ how small a portion is heard,” or can be heard, “ of him !” “ Who can by searching find out God ? who can find out the Almighty unto perfection ? It is higher than heaven ; what can we do ? deeper than hell ; what can we know ? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.”³ When we have strained our faculties to the utmost, in conceiving of grandeur and excellence, we are still at an immeasurable distance from the grandeur and the excellence

¹ Rev. i. 17, 18 ; Ps. xc. 2 ; Jer. xxiii. 24 ; James i. 17 ; Dan. iv. 35 ; Acts xv. 13 ; Heb. iv. 13 ; Job xxvi. 6 ; Isa. xxvii. 29 ; Job ix. 4 ; Rom. xi. 33 ; Hab. i. 13 ; Isa. vi. 3 ; Deut. xxxii. 4 ; Job xxxiv. 10.

² Ps. cxxx. 4, 7.

³ Job xi. 7.

which have made his infinite nature their eternal dwelling-place.

His "is the greatness;" and the most exalted of his creatures, his whole creation, is before him less than a drop to the ocean, than an atom to the universe of matter, "less than nothing and vanity." His is "the power;" and all created might is in his hand, to be exerted, directed, restrained, and resumed at his pleasure. His is "the glory;" and all created splendour in his presence fades into obscurity, and vanishes into nothing. His is "the victory:" in all his purposes he ever is the overcomer; and all victories gained by his creatures are won by power derived from him. His is "the majesty;" and all the potentates of the earth before him are contemptible worms, and their loftiest thrones are not worthy to be his footstool. All that is in the heavens and the earth is his; he is the maker, preserver, governor, supreme and sole proprietor of the universe, of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things. His is the kingdom: unbounded dominion belongs to him; his reign stretches throughout immensity and eternity; and all powers and authorities, in all worlds, are under his feet. And all this physical and intellectual greatness, this infinity of power, and wisdom, and dominion, is heightened by corresponding moral grandeur. His is a purity before which the holiness of angels waxes dim; His a righteousness, of the stability of which the everlasting mountains is a faint figure; His a benignity, of which all the kindness in the hearts of men and angels is but a shadow.

Surely this Being is worthy to be feared; surely he is the meet object of the supreme esteem and reverence and love of all intelligent beings; surely, to be the objects of his approbation and love and care, is the highest honour and happiness of such creatures,—to be the objects of his disapprobation, is the deepest disgrace and misery that can

befall them ; and, of course, to seek his approbation, in conformity of mind and will to him, is their highest wisdom and duty.

Such are the convictions and feelings of the unfallen and restored, the angelic and human, inhabitants of the celestial world. Their unceasing hymn is, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, great and marvellous are thy works, just and true are thy ways ; who shall not fear thee, and glorify thy name ? Thou, Thou only, art holy." And this enlightened, affectionate sense of the infinite grandeur and excellence of God, is in their minds a principle of supreme allegiance to his holy government, rendering it morally impossible that they should disregard his authority, or seek their happiness in anything but in union of mind and will and enjoyment with him.

Had sin never been introduced into the universe, this would have been the only kind of fear of God that ever would have existed. It would have been a fear without torment. The same excellences which produced awe would have produced confidence and love. All would have feared God ; none would have been afraid of him. Indeed, fear, in the sense of the anticipation of evil, would have had no being ; it would have had no object ; for evil was an impossibility under his government while his intelligent creatures retained their allegiance.

But sin has been introduced into the world ; and from the very excellence of the divine character, God appears as the hater of sin and the punisher of sinners, and of course an object of fear or terror to them, as even imagination cannot grasp the miseries which may be expected from infinite wisdom and power employed as the agents of incensed justice. He has inflicted severe and numerous evils both on sinning men and angels ; and he has threatened to inflict still more dreadful evils on them. He has "cast the

angels who kept not their first abode, down out of heaven into hell," and "reserved them under chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day," when they shall be doomed to everlasting punishment in the lake that burneth with fire unquenchable, "prepared for" them. He has visited the sin of man with many and varied tokens of his displeasure. Death has entered into the world, and passed upon all men; and the declarations of his faithful word are, "The wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth shall die. God will turn the wicked into hell. There is no peace to the wicked. God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious: the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. The Lord will not at all acquit the wicked. Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. In the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgments of God, he will render to every man according to his deeds; to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." Who can hear these faithful sayings without exclaiming, "Thou, even thou, art to be feared; and who can stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?" "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."¹

It is obvious, then, that God has become the object of fear to sinful intelligent creatures, in a sense altogether different from that in which he would have for ever continued to have been an object of fear to them had they remained in innocence. To the sinning angels, for whom no salvation has been provided, and who know that no sal-

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 4; Jude 6; Rom. vi. 23; Ezek. xviii. 4; Ps. ix. 17; Isa. lvii. 21; Nahum i. 2, 3; Rom. ii. 6, 8, 9; Ps. lxxvi. 7; Heb. x. 31.

vation is provided for them, every one of those perfections which in their own nature are fitted to produce holy awe, is a source of unmixed terror, as all of them go to enhance the security, the severity, and the duration of their misery. They have nothing to expect from God but “a certain fearful looking for of judgment,” and then “everlasting destruction from his presence, and from the glory of his power;” and but for the sovereign mercy of God, he must have been to all sinning men, equally as to all sinning angels, thus an object of this fear that has torment.

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he has loved” man, has formed and executed a plan of deliverance from the tremendous evils to which he has exposed himself by sin; and he has done this in a way which places in a stronger point of light his hatred of sin, than the infliction of eternal punishment on the whole sinning race would have done. He has made to meet on his incarnate Son the iniquities of us all. Exaction has been made, and he has answered it. He has been wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, and has undergone the chastisement of our peace. He has borne our sins in his own body on the tree; he has given himself for us, the just in the room of the unjust. God, in the word of the truth of the gospel, has set Him forth a propitiation in his blood, declaring his righteousness in the remission of sins that are past through his forbearance, declaring his righteousness that he is just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus; and he has committed to men the ministry of reconciliation, sending them forth to proclaim, “God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses; for he hath made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so is the Son of man lifted up;

that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God sent not his Son to condemn the world, but to save the world.”¹ Every human being who credits this “faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation,” obtains a personal interest in the Christian salvation, and is secured of all its blessings.

While the sinner continues unbelieving, he is exposed to all the evils denounced against sin; and in the degree in which he becomes aware of his situation, previously to his embracing the gospel, he must be the subject of that fear of God, that dread of his righteous vengeance, which is the habitual sentiment of devils. This emotion, which is just a consciousness of having merited the displeasure of God, a realization of the danger of suffering from his hand the punishment of their sins, plainly possesses no moral excellence, though to a certain extent it may check open sin, and may be overruled by the good Spirit for urging men to look around for deliverance, and to “flee for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them in the gospel.” It is as plainly a sentiment which the faith of the gospel, in the degree in which it prevails, banishes from the heart. “Faith worketh by love;” and the love which faith works “casts out” *this* “fear.”

But while the faith of the gospel casts out this fear, it produces that fear which is enjoined in the text, and which is one of the leading principles of Christian obedience. The grandeur of the divine character is more strikingly manifested in those divine dispensations, the incarnation and sacrifice of the Only-Begotten, by which the salvation of sinners is made consistent with and illustrative of the divine holiness and righteousness, and a statement of which

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19-21; John iii. 14-17.

forms the gospel message, than in all the other works of God. Nothing is so well fitted to put the fear of God, which will preserve men from offending him, into the heart, as an enlightened view of the cross of Christ. "There shine spotless holiness, inflexible justice, incomprehensible wisdom, omnipotent power, holy love. None of these excellences darken or eclipse the other, but every one of them rather gives a lustre to the rest. They mingle their beams, and shine with united eternal splendour: the just Judge, the merciful Father, the wise Governor. Nowhere does justice appear so awful, mercy so amiable, or wisdom so profound."¹

These views of the character of God naturally and necessarily produce an awful sense of his infinite excellence, and a holy fear of offending him. They lodge deep in the heart the conviction, that it is "an evil thing and a bitter to sin against him." It appears to the mind, under the influence of this principle, absolute madness to do what is opposed to the will of him who is infinitely wise, and righteous, and good; and thus to lose the sense of his approbation, and to expose ourselves to his rebukes and chastisements, in order to obtain any good which man can bestow, or to avoid any evil which man can inflict.

This fear of God, which is to be obtained by contemplating these displays of the divine character, is to be manifested in carefully avoiding whatever is opposed to his will, whether in the way of neglecting to do what he has commanded, or doing what he has forbidden, and in keeping out of the way of temptation, and abstaining even from the appearance of evil. This fear of God ought to be the habitual disposition of our hearts. We should "be in the fear of the Lord all the day long;" and we should never forget, that the only satisfactory proof that God has put his fear in our heart, is

¹ Maclaurin.

to be found in our not departing from him. The best evidence we can afford that we fear the Lord, is our delighting greatly in his commandments,—our perfecting holiness, in cleansing ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit by the fear of God. Such is the Christian's duty to his Supreme Ruler: to fear him; to act as if we considered his authority to be supreme,—no blessing to be compared with his approbation,—no evil to be compared with his displeasure. Thus shall we find, that “the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.”¹

Nothing can be more reasonable, more worthy of a rational being, than compliance with this command; nothing more unreasonable than neglect or violation of it. Well may we say with Nehemiah, “Ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God?” or with Jeremiah, “Fear ye not me, saith the Lord, O foolish people, and without understanding? Will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might.” Or, in the words of our Master who is in heaven, “Be not afraid of them who can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear Him who, after he hath killed, hath power to destroy both soul and body in hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.” Or, in the words of his angel, “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is coming.” Let us then habitually fear “that great and dreadful name, the Lord our God;” let us “feel

¹ See note D.

the force of his almightiness ;”¹ let us fear, that so we may not come short of the rest, a promise of entering into which has been left us ; “let us have grace to worship God acceptably with reverence and godly fear : for our God is a consuming fire.”²

IV. CHRISTIANS ARE TO “HONOUR THE KING.”

Let us now proceed to make a few remarks on our duty as Christians to our subordinate ruler, the civil magistrate. While we “fear God,” we are to “honour the king.” “The king” is here to be considered as an expression just equivalent to the civil magistrate. The command is, ‘Pay a proper respect to every person who is invested with civil authority, especially to those who are at the head of the government.’ The honour here referred to is that which is due to the office, whatever may be the personal character of him who fills it ; the respect due to the magistrate, when acting as a magistrate. When the magistrate is personally possessed of those qualities which are the proper objects of respect,—when he is a man distinguished for his wisdom, piety, prudence, justice, and benevolence,—he is to be honoured for these, and honoured the more because he is a magistrate, as high station abounds with temptation ; and he who in such trying circumstances acquits himself well, is worthy of peculiar respect. But whatever be his personal character, though he may be an irreligious and immoral man in his private capacity, which is always to be regretted, especially as it is apt to bring the magistracy into contempt, we are to respect him in his official capacity, and to honour him while he performs the functions of a public ruler. Christians must keep far away from the behaviour of those

¹ Jeremy Taylor.

² Neh. v. 9 ; Jer. x. 7 ; Luke xii. 4, 5 ; Rev. xiv. 7 ; Heb. xii. 28.

whom the apostle in his second epistle describes as “ presumptuous and self-willed, who despise governments, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.”

The honour which we are to cherish for the magistrate is to be manifested chiefly in our conscientious and cheerful obedience to all his lawful commands. We are bound to disobey him if he commands us to do anything which is forbidden by the law of God; and we are not bound to obey him if he lays on us commands unwarranted by the constitution and laws of the country; but with these exceptions, we are to be “ subject to the higher powers.” We are not to think, that if we are obedient in some points, we may venture to be disobedient in others. We are to obey all lawful commands; for all rest on the same authority. Whosoever keepeth the whole law, with the exception of offending in one point, is guilty of all; guilty of despising the authority of the whole law, guilty of failing in his duty as a good subject. It is the less necessary that I dwell on this subject, as not long ago I had an opportunity of discussing it at full length when illustrating the 13th and 14th verses of this chapter: “ Submit yourselves, for the Lord’s sake, to every human ordinance for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them who do well; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or to governors, as to them who are sent by him.”

It will be proper, before concluding, that I in a few words point out the connection between the two precepts, “ Fear God; Honour the king.” The connection is twofold. The first precept is at once the foundation and the limit of the second.¹

¹ “ ‘ Giving to God what is God’s ’ not only affords the basis, but also fixes the just limitations, of the civil obligations growing out of relations brought about by divine providence.”—NEANDER.

It is its foundation. The loyalty of a Christian man rests on a regard to the divine authority. He honours the king because he fears God. There are many who, in their obedience to civil authority, are influenced entirely by reasons of expediency. They are "subject, not for conscience, but for wrath's sake." They obey, because otherwise they would be punished; and they show this by violating law without scruple, when they think this can be done with advantage or impunity. There are others who obey because they consider it right to obey; but in their notion of what is right, they have little or no reference to a recognition of divine authority. Their obedience has nothing of the character of a religious duty; they obey the magistrate as they pay their debts: they think both right; but in both cases "God is not in all their thoughts."

The enlightened, consistent Christian recognises civil government as a divine ordinance. He believes the doctrine laid down by the apostle, that "there is no power but of God, that the powers that be are ordained of God, and that whosoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God." He believes that the magistrate is "a minister of God to him for good," and acts accordingly, being "subject for conscience sake." He recognises the authority of God in these commands, "Fear the Lord and the king. Render to Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's. Let every soul be subject to the higher powers. Be subject to principalities and powers. Obey magistrates; submit to every human institution for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them who do well, for the Lord's sake." With him obedience is not a matter of human arrangement, of expediency, of interest, or even of mere moral right; it is a religious duty.

This secures a uniformity of obedience which nothing else can do, and therefore there is no class of subjects who

may be so safely relied on for consistent loyalty as enlightened Christians. They obey the magistrates because God commands them to do so, and perform their civil duties as "doing service to the Lord." What Nehemiah says of himself, in reference to certain practices of his predecessors in the government, a Christian man may say of himself, in reference to the practice of eluding civil duties and evading civil taxes, in which many who, it may be, pride themselves on their loyalty, do not scruple to indulge when they can do it safely: "so did not I, because of the fear of God."

But as the precept "Fear God" is with a Christian the foundation of his civil obedience, so it is also its limit. A Christian should honour the king so far, and only so far, as this is consistent with fearing God. Should the civil magistrate require us to do anything that is inconsistent with the divine law; should he require us to neglect what God has commanded, or to do what God has forbidden, we must fear God, and not honour the king, if such obedience is to be accounted honour. The principle on which we are to act in such cases is a very plain one: "We ought to obey God rather than man;" and whatever the consequences may be, it must be acted on; and he who really fears God will rise above the fear of man. Fearing God, he will know no other fear.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego honoured the king by a faithful discharge of their duties as superintendents of the province of Babylon; but when he commanded them to worship the colossal image he had erected in the plain of Dura, with the assurance that, if they did not, they should be cast into a burning fiery furnace, fearing God, they were "not afraid of the king's commandment;" but respectfully, yet determinedly, said, "Be it known to thee, O king, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Daniel, on prayer being prohibited by

the edict of a monarch whom he most faithfully served, disregarded the edict, and took good care that this should be no secret. "When he knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house ; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." The very apostle who says, "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every ordinance of man," when the Jewish magistrates commanded him and John "to speak no more in the name of Jesus," replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you rather than to God, judge ye ;" and when called to account for acting out this principle, his answer was, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

It seems a common notion, that I am bound to obey the law just because it is the law ; and if what the law requires be a wrong thing, the magistrate, not I, must be answerable for it. But neither Scripture nor reason sanctions such a transfer of moral responsibility. "Every man must give account of HIMSELF to God." Most certainly I am bound to obey the law of the land, because it is the law of the land ; but only so far as obedience to that law does not necessarily imply disobedience to the law of God : no further. "Honour the king" must always be subordinate to "Fear God :"

" Let Cæsar's dues be ever paid
To Cæsar and his throne ;
But consciences and souls were made
To be the Lord's alone." ¹

I have thus finished the illustration of the apostle's account of the condition and duty of Christians. It may serve a good purpose, before taking leave of the subject, to present you with a general outline of the statements which have been made.

¹ Watts. "Sic honorandus Rex, ut ne contra Deum peccemus."—CHRYSOSTOM, in Matt. Hom. lxxi.

The condition of Christians is at once one of perfect liberty and entire subjection. They are "free," and they are "the servants of God." They are free in reference to God, both as being delivered from a condemned state and a slavish character; free in reference to their fellow-men; free in reference to the powers and principles of evil. They are the servants of God, bought by the blood of his Son, formed to habits of obedience by his Spirit, voluntarily devoted to and actually engaged in his service.

Their duty is generally to act according to their condition; to act as freemen in reference to God, men, and the powers and principles of evil, guarding against abusing their freedom in any of these forms; and to act as the servants of God, cultivating the principles of obedience, habitually keeping in view those perfections of the divine character, and those relations in which they stand to God, in which the obligation to serve God originates, and the belief of which is the grand means which the holy Scriptures employ to fit and dispose us to recognise and discharge that obligation; making themselves acquainted with the rule of obedience, carefully studying the word of God, observing the providence of God, and seeking the guidance of the Spirit of God; and exercising this principle, and applying this rule in actual obedience, both inward and outward, both active and passive,—obedience characterized by implicitness, impartiality, cheerfulness, and permanence.

More particularly, their duty is to "honour all men,"—to cherish respect for all who, from their station, endowments, or character, deserve respect, though they be not Christians; and to cherish and express in their conduct respect for every man, as a rational, responsible, immortal being;—to "love the brotherhood,"—to cultivate and manifest an affectionate regard to the Christian society by joining a Christian church; being regular in attending its assemblies, contributing time,

labour, substance to its objects, seeking its purity, peace, and increase; and by cherishing, and in every becoming manner expressing, an affectionate regard to the whole household of faith, both in earth and heaven, the one family called by the worthy name;—"to fear God,"—cherishing such an awful sense of his infinite grandeur and excellence, as will make us practically consider his approbation as the highest of blessings, his disapprobation as the greatest of evils;—and finally, "to honour the king,"—yielding a cheerful conscientious obedience to the laws,—an obedience founded on, and limited by, the command to "fear God."

All that remains now is the practical application. But that must be attended to, not here, but elsewhere. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." May our improved character and conduct in all the various relations of life, show that we understand how practically to apply the instructions we have received, and that we have learned, "as free, not using our liberty as a cloak of wickedness, but as the servants of God, to honour all men, to love the brotherhood, to fear God, and to honour the king." "Wherefore," my beloved brethren, "lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness," let us show that we have "received with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls; but be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves," not God,—not your brethren even, generally, only your own selves. "For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

NOTE A. p. 92.

“Man was God’s own creature, raised out of nothing by his mighty and most arbitrary hand: it was in his power and choice, whether he ever should have a being; any or none; another, or this, of so noble an order and kind. The designation was most apt of so excellent a creature, to be immediately sacred to himself and his own converse, his temple and habitation, the mansion and residence of his presence and indwelling glory. There was nothing whereto he was herein designed, whereof his nature was not capable. His soul was, after the required manner, receptive of a Deity. Its powers were competent to their appointed work and employment. It could entertain God by knowledge and contemplation of his glorious excellences, by reverence and love, by adoration and praise. This was the highest kind of dignity whereto created nature could be raised, the most honourable state. How high and quick an advance! This moment nothing; the next, a being capable and full of God.”

“The stately ruins (of human nature) are visible to every eye that bear in their front, yet extant, this doleful inscription,—
HERE GOD ONCE DWELT. Enough appears of the admirable frame and structure of the soul of man, to show the divine presence did some time reside in it; more than enough of vicious deformity, to proclaim that he is now retired and gone. The lamps are extinct; the altar overturned; the light and love are now vanished, which did the one shine with so heavenly brightness, the other burn with such pious fervour. The golden candlestick is displaced, and thrown away as a useless thing, to make way for the throne of the prince of darkness; the sacred incense, which sent rolling up in clouds its rich perfumes, is exchanged for a poisonous hellish vapour. The comely order of this house is turned all into confusion; the beauties of holiness into noxious impurities; the house of prayer into a den of thieves. The noble powers which were designed and dedicated to divine contemplation and delight, are alienated to the service of the most despicable idols, and employed in vilest intuitions and embraces; to behold and admire lying vanities; to indulge and cherish lust and wickedness. . . . Look upon the fragments of that

curious sculpture, which once adorned this palace of that great King: the relics of common notions; the lively prints of some undefaced truth; the fair ideas of things; the yet legible precepts that relate to practice. Behold with what accuracy the broken pieces show them to have been engraven by the finger of God; and how they now lie torn and scattered, one in this dark corner and another in that, buried in heaps of dust and rubbish! There is not now a system, an entire table of coherent truths to be found, or a frame of holiness; but some shivered parcels. And if any, with great skill and labour, apply themselves to draw out here one piece, and there another, and set them together, they serve rather to show how exquisite the divine workmanship was in the original composition, than for present use to the excellent purposes for which the whole was first designed. . . . You come amid all this confusion as into the ruined palace of some great prince; in which you see here the fragments of a noble pillar, there the shattered pieces of some curious imagery, and all lying, neglected and useless, among heaps of dust. . . . The faded glory, the darkness, the disorder, the impurity, the decayed state in all respects of the temple, too plainly show THE GREAT INHABITANT IS GONE.”—HOWE. *Living Temple*, Part ii. ch. iv.

“Homo est animal rationale, et ex hoc, cunctis terrenis animantibus excellentius atque præstantius, sed in qualibet minutissima muscula bene consideranti stuporem mentis ingerat, laudemque pariat creatoris. Ipse itaque animæ humanæ mentem dedit, ubi ratio et intelligentia in infante sopita est quodammodo, quasi nulla sit, excitanda scilicet atque exserenda ætatis accessu, qua sit scientiæ capax atque doctrinæ, et habilis perceptioni veritatis et amor boni; qua capacitate hauriat sapientiam virtutibusque sit prædita, quibus prudenter, fortiter, temperanter et juste adversus errores et cætera ingenerata vitia dimicet, eaque nullius rei desiderio nisi boni illius summi atque immutabilis vincat. Quod etsi non faciat ipsa talium bonorum capacitas in natura rationali divinitus instituta, quantum sit boni, quam mirabile opus omnipotentis, quis competenter effatur, aut cogitat? Præter enim artes bene vivendi, et ad immortalem perveniendi felicitatem quæ virtutes vocantur, et sola Dei gratia

quæ in Christo est, filiis promissionis regnique donantur, nonne humano ingenio tot tantæque artes sunt inventæ et exercitæ partim necessariæ, partim voluptariæ, ut tam excellens vis mentis atque rationis in his etiam rebus quas superfluas, imo et periculosas perniciosasque appetit, quantum bonum habeat in natura, unde ista potuit vel invenire, vel discere, vel exercere testetur? Vestimentorum et ædificiorum ad opera quam mirabilia, quam stupenda industria humana pervenerit, quo in agricultura, quo in navigatione profecerit: quæ in fabricatione quorumque vasorum, vel etiam statuarum et picturarum varietate excogitaverit et impleverit: quæ in theatris mirabilia spectantibus, audientibus incredibilia facienda et exhibenda molita sit: in capiendis, occidendis, domandis irrationalibus animantibus quæ et quanta repererit: adversus ipsos homines, tot genera venenorum, tot armorum, tot machinamentorum, et pro salute mortali tuenda atque reparanda quot medicamenta atque adjuvamenta comprehenderit: pro voluptate faucium, quot condimenta et gulæ incitamenta repererit: ad indicandas et suadendas cogitationes, multitudinem varietatemque signorum, ubi præcipuum locum verba et literæ tenent: ad delectandos animos, quos elocutionis ornatus, quam diversorum carminum copiam: ad mulcendas aures, quot organa musica, quot cantilenæ modos excogitaverit: quantam peritiam dimensionum atque numerorum, meatusque et ordines siderum quanta sagacitate comprehenderit: quam multa rerum mundanarum cognitione se impleverit, quis possit eloqui, maxime si velimus non acervatim cuncta congerere, sed in singulis immorari? In ipsis postremo erroribus et falsitatibus defendendis, quam magna claruerint ingenia philosophorum atque hæreticorum, quis existimare sufficiat?"

“Apostolus de ipsis in illud regnum prædestinatus loquens: Qui proprio, inquit, filio non perpercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit eum, quomodo non etiam cum illo omnia nobis donabit? Cum hæc promissio complebitur, quid erimus? quales erimus? quæ bona in illo regno accepturi sumus, quandoquidem Christo moriente pro nobis tale iam pignus accepimus? qualis erit spiritus hominis, nullum omnino habens vitium, nec sub quo jaceat: nec cui cedat: nec contra quod saltem laudabiliter dimicet, paca-

tissima virtute perfectus? Rerum ibi omnium quanta, quam speciosa, quam certa scientia sine errore aliquo, vel labore, ubi Dei sapientia de ipso suo fonte potabitur, cum summa felicitate, sine ulla difficultate? Quale erit corpus, quod omni modo spiritui subditum, et eo sufficienter vivificatum nullis alimoniis indigebit? Non enim animale, sed spirituale erit, habens quidem carnis, sed sine ulla carnali corruptione, substantiam."—AUGUSTINUS. *De Civitate Dei*, Lib. xxii. cap. xxiv.

NOTE B. p. 111.

The sentences which follow formed part of the discourse, when delivered as an address to a joint meeting of the United Secession and Relief Presbyteries of Edinburgh. The union anticipated has been consummated under the happiest auspices. ESTO PERPETUA.

"These two bodies¹ are, in reality, more united than any one large ecclesiastical body that I am acquainted with; and it would be much easier to prove that most of those bodies should become two or more distinct societies, than that our two distinct societies should not become one. I will not speak of the great antichristian confederacy, which boasts of union as one of its characteristics; but in which almost every variety of opinion, every degree of belief, and unbelief, and misbelief, may be found, under the cloak of 'exoteric faith in the bond of ignorance, fear, and hypocrisy.'² Nor will I speak of the established churches, those 'cities of the nations,' daughters of 'Great Babylon,' which in this respect have generally a strong likeness to their mystic mother; but I run no hazard of being confuted when I say, that there is far less extent of agreement of sentiment, and much greater diversity of opinion, among the Congregationalists, or the Baptists, or the Methodists, in Britain, who are generally regarded as each forming but one body, or in either of the great bodies of Presbyterians in America, than in the two churches which are represented here this evening. I do not think that it would be easy to prove that these churches should ever have been separate, I should not like to attempt it, though their separate existence may easily be accounted for, on principles which throw no discredit on the conscientiousness of either

¹ The United Secession and the Relief Churches.

² Jortin.

body; but I am quite sure it would be very difficult to prove that they ought not now to be one. I know no argument which would prove that I should not unite with the Relief Church, which, if fairly followed out, would not compel me to abandon the communion of the United Secession Church. It has been my conviction for a considerable period, that if these churches are not ripe for union, they ought to be so; and, while utterly indisposed to push an incorporation of the two bodies at the hazard of mutilating either, or of pressing brethren to take a step regarding which they are not 'fully persuaded in their own minds,' I am more and more convinced, that if those ministers and people in both bodies, who see their way clear, would act out their principles to the full extent that the decisions of the two supreme courts warrant, the period could not be distant when the feeling of wonder why, being one, we should still continue divided, and the experience of the sacred delights and solid advantages of such occasional intercourse, would call forth, on the part of the Christian people, an expression of desire for complete union, which the two Synods would not only feel warranted to respond to, but would feel it impossible to refuse to gratify. The Lord hasten it in his time."

NOTE C. p. 116.

There is something very pleasing in the following ascription of praise to God by a bishop of the twelfth century, clothed though it be in monkish rhymes, which Archbishop Usher designates "*Rhythmos Elegantissimos*,"—an epithet which makes us somewhat doubtful if his Grace's taste was at all proportionate to his piety and learning:—

"Super cuncta, subter cunctus,
Extra cuncta, intra cunctus,
Subter cuncta, nec subtractus,
Super cuncta, nec elatus,
Inter cuncta, nec inclusus,
Extra cuncta, nec exclusus,
Intra, nusquam coarctaris,
Extra, nusquam delataris,
Subter, nullo fatigaris,
Super, nullo sustentaris."

HILDEBERTUS. Rhythm. de Trin.

NOTE D. p. 124.

The following account of the fear of God which Christians should cherish, by Archbishop Leighton, presents a noble specimen of the most of the characteristic excellences of that most saintly man, sound divine, and elegant scholar:—

“This fear hath chiefly these things:—1. A reverent esteem of the majesty of God, which is a main fundamental thing in religion, and that moulds the heart most powerfully to the obedience of his will. 2. A firm belief of the purity of God, and of his power and justice; that he loves holiness and hates all sin, and can and will punish it. 3. A right apprehension of the bitterness of his wrath and the sweetness of his love: that his incensed anger is the most terrible and intolerable thing in the world, absolutely the fearfulest of all evils; and, on the other side, his love, of all good things the best, the most blessed and delightful, yea, only blessedness. Life is the name of the sweetest good we know; and yet this ‘loving-kindness is better than life,’ says David. 4. It supposes likewise sovereign love to God, for his own infinite excellency and goodness. 5. From all these things spring a most earnest desire to please him in all things, and unwillingness to offend him in the least; and because of our danger through the multitude and strength of tentations, and our own weakness, a continual self-suspicion, a holy fear lest we should sin, and a care and watchfulness that we sin not, and deep sorrow and speedy returning, and humbling before him, when we have sinned.

“There is indeed a base kind of fear, that, in the usual distinction, they call servile fear; but to account all fear of the judgments and wrath of God a servile fear, (or, not to stand upon words,) to account such a fear improper to the children of God, I conceive, is a wide mistake. Indeed, to fear the punishments of sin, without regard to God, and his justice as the inflicter of them, or to forbear to sin only because of those punishments, so as if a man can be secured from those, who hath no other respect to God that would make him fear to offend, this is the character of a slavish and base mind.

“Again, for a man so to apprehend wrath in relation to himself as to be still under the horror of it in that notion, and not

to apprehend redemption and deliverance by Jesus Christ, is to be under that spirit of bondage which the apostle speaks of, Rom. viii. And such fear, though a child of God may for a time be under it, yet the lively actings of faith and persuasion of God's love, and the feeling of reflex love to him in the soul, doth cast it out; according to that of the apostle, 1 John iv. 18, 'True love casteth out fear.' But to apprehend the punishments the Lord threatens against sin as certain and true, and to consider the greatness and fearfulness of them, but especially the terror of the Lord's anger and hot displeasure above all punishments, and (though not only, no, nor chiefly for these) yet, in contemplation of those, as very great and weighty, to be afraid to offend that God who hath threatened such things as the just reward of sin: this, I say, is not incongruous with the estate of the sons of God; yea, it is their duty and their property even thus to fear.

"1. This is the very end for which God hath published these intimations of his justice, and hath threatened to punish men if they transgress, to the end they may fear and not transgress; so that not to look upon them thus, and to be affected with them answerably to their intendment, were a very grievous sin, a slight and disregard put upon the words of the great God.

"2. Of all others, the children of God have the rightest and clearest knowledge of God, and the deepest belief of his word; and therefore they cannot choose but be afraid, and more afraid than all others, to fall under the stroke of his hand. They know more of the greatness, and truth, and justice of God, than others, and therefore they fear when he threatens. 'My flesh trembleth for fear of thee (says David), and I am afraid of thy judgments. Yea, they tremble when they hear the sentence against others, or see the execution on them; it minds them when they see public executions; and 'knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men,' says St Paul; they cry out with Moses, Ps. xc., 'Who knows the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear so is thy wrath.' It is not an imagination nor invention that makes men fear more than they need; His wrath is as terrible as any that fears it most can apprehend, and beyond. So that this doth not only consist with the estate of the saints, but is their very character, to tremble at the word of their Lord: the rest neglect what he says, till death and judgment seize on them;

but the godly know and believe that 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.'

"And though they have firm promises, and a kingdom that cannot be shaken, yet they have still this grace by which they serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, even in this consideration, that our God, even he that is ours by peculiar covenant, is a 'consuming fire' (Heb. xii. 28, 29).

"But indeed, together with this, yea, more than with these, they are persuaded to fear the Lord by the sense of his great love to them, and the power of that love that works in them towards him, and is wrought in them by his. 'They shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days' (Hos. iii. 5). In those days his goodness shall manifest itself more than before; the beams of his love shall break forth more abundantly in the days of the gospel, and shall beat more direct and hotter on the hearts of men; and then they shall fear him more, because they shall love him more.

"This fear agrees well both with faith and love; yea, they work it: compare Ps. xxxi. 23, with Ps. xxxiv. 9; and that same Ps. xxxiv. 8 with 9, and Ps. cxii. 1 with 7. The heart, touched with the loadstone of divine love, trembles still with this godly fear, and yet looks fixedly by faith to that star of Jacob, Jesus Christ, who guides it to the haven of happiness.

"The looking upon God in the face of Jesus Christ takes off that terror of his countenance that drives men from him; and in the smiles of his love that appear through Christ, there is such a power as unites their hearts to him, but unites them so as to fear his name, as the Psalmist's prayer is. He puts such a fear in their hearts as will not cause them depart from, yea, causes that they 'shall not depart from him.'

"And this is the purest and highest kind of godly fear that springs from love; and though it excludes not the consideration of wrath as terrible in itself, and some fear of it, yet it may surmount it; and doubtless, where much of that love possesses the heart, it will sometimes drown the other consideration, that it shall scarcely be sensible at all, and will constantly set it aside, and persuade a man purely for the goodness and loveliness of God to fear to offend him, though there were no interest at all in it of a man's own personal misery or happiness."

DISCOURSE XIII.

THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN SERVANTS ENJOINED AND ENFORCED.

“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear: not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.”—1 PET. ii. 18-25.

IN these words we have a further illustration of the general injunction laid on Christians by the apostle at the 12th verse of this chapter, to “have their conversation honest among the Gentiles;” that is, so to conduct themselves as that even their heathen neighbours should be constrained to approve them. That injunction is, as it were, the text of a considerably long paragraph which immediately follows. The manner in which that command was to be obeyed, was by a careful performance of relative duties, especially such as they owed to their heathen connections. Of the excellence of such a course of conduct they were qualified judges, which they were not of duties of a more strictly religious and Christian character. All Christians were

therefore to yield a loyal subjection to civil authority, as lodged both in its supreme and subordinate administrators; to cherish and display a becoming respect for all who, on whatever ground, had a claim to respect; to cultivate and manifest that peculiar regard to the Christian society, which in Christians even heathens could not help considering as becoming and proper; and to show a reverence for the supreme civil power, based on, and only limited by, the reverence due to Him who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords." The natural tendency of such "good works," habitually and perseveringly maintained, was to overcome the prejudice of their heathen neighbours, and constrain those "who spoke against them as evil-doers, to glorify God in the day of visitation."

Another way in which the same desirable object was to be sought, is that specified in our text: such Christians as stood in the relation of servants, especially to heathen masters, faithfully discharging the duties and patiently submitting to the hardships connected with the situation in which they were placed. The passage contains an account first of the duties of Christian servants generally, and of the manner in which they should be performed—they are to be "subject to their masters," and they are to be so "in all fear;" and then of the duty of a particular class of servants—those who have not good and gentle, but froward masters, and of the motives which urge to its performance. Though their service may be harder, and their treatment more severe, than those of their more favoured brethren, they are to be equally obedient and submissive; and they are to act in this way, because such conduct is peculiarly well-pleasing to God, and because it is a part of that holiness, that conformity to Christ, to which as Christians they were called. Let us turn our attention to these important and interesting topics in their order.

§ 1. *The foundation and nature of the relation between servant and master.*

Servants, at the period when, and in the country where, the Christians to whom the apostle's epistle was directed lived, were divided into two classes, the bond and the free : the first, slaves, persons who had been taken in war, or had been born in a state of slavery, or had for certain considerations sold their freedom ; the second, hired servants, persons who, as in this and other free countries, voluntarily sell their time and labour during a specified period for a certain price, under the name of sustenance and wages. The injunction of the apostle is intended for both these classes ; for however a person may be brought into the condition of a servant, the duties of that condition are substantially the same. Before entering on the consideration of these duties, it may not be without its use to unfold, in a few sentences, the nature and foundation of that relation in which these duties originate.

All men, viewed merely as men, are equal. They all have the same nature, and there are rights and duties common to all. They all belong to the same order of God's creatures : "God has made of one blood all the nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth."¹ Their bodies have the same members, their minds the same faculties. They all are rational, responsible, immortal beings ; and every man is equally bound to treat every other man according to the laws of truth, justice, and humanity.

But while, in reference to nature, men are equal, in reference to condition they are endlessly diversified. In bodily qualities, such as beauty, strength, and agility ; in mental faculties, such as judgment, imagination, and memory ; in external circumstances, from the rudest state

¹ Acts xvii. 26.

of barbarism to the highest state of refinement, from the most abject poverty to the most abundant wealth,—the greatest differences prevail among the possessors of our common nature. And these differences, to a great extent, are the necessary effect of the operations of the God of nature and of providence.

In consequence of this diversity of condition, individuals are not sufficient for their own comfortable support, and stand in need of one another's assistance; and the happiness of men in society, depends on mutually giving and receiving—giving what they can spare, receiving what they need. Out of these facts grow all social arrangements, and among the rest the relation of master and servant.

A person possessed of property finds it inconvenient or impossible for him to do personally many things which he finds it desirable should be done, and he parts with a portion of his property to induce another person, fit for accomplishing the objects in view, who has time and skill and capacity of labour to dispose of, to do for him what he cannot do, or is not inclined to do, for himself. The master has no natural authority over the servant. He has no more right to demand the labours of the servant, than the servant has to demand his.

The relation, when legitimately formed, originates in a bargain or agreement between two independent individuals; the one having property, the other labour, to dispose of. The master stipulates that the servant shall perform certain services for certain wages; and the servant stipulates that the master shall pay him certain wages for certain services. The result of the bargain is, that the master has authority to demand the stipulated service; and the servant has a right, which he may call on their common superior to enforce, to receive his wages.¹

¹ In this and the succeeding part of the discourse, the author has availed himself of the useful labours of Bishop Fleetwood, in his

§ 2. *The duties of Christian servants in general.*

Having thus stated, as shortly and plainly as I could, the nature and foundation of the relation of the servant to the master, let us now attend to the duties which flow from it. These are all summed up in one very comprehensive word in the passage before us: "Subjection." "Servants, be subject to your masters:" that is, let your will be regulated by their will. In other words, be obedient to their commands; be submissive to their arrangements.

(1.) Servants are to be obedient to the commands of their master; that is, they are to do what their master bids them, in the way in which he requires it to be done, to the best of their ability. A servant cannot reasonably expect to be his own master; to be allowed to choose how he shall employ his time, what he shall do, or even in what manner the service required shall be executed. He has taken a price for his time and his capacity of labour, and it is but just that he who has bought them should dispose of them. They are no more his than his wages are his master's. He is a person under authority, who, when bid come, must come; when bid go, must go; and when bid do this, must do it.

The servant's obligation to obey, however, is by no means unlimited. It has bounds corresponding with the master's right. No master has, or can have, a right to command anything that is inconsistent with the divine law; and of course no servant can be under an obligation to comply with such a command. The rule is plain and absolute, when the will of an earthly master is opposed to the will of our Master in heaven: "We ought to obey God rather than men."¹

Sermons on Relative Duties, and of Dr Stennet, in his *Discourses on Domestic Duties*.

¹ Acts v. 29.

Should a master require his servant to speak falsely, to act fraudulently, or to violate any divine precept, such a command ought to meet with a respectful but peremptory refusal. And it is for the servant to judge whether a particular command is or is not consistent with the divine law; for "every one of us shall give account of *himself* to God."¹ It will not be sustained as an excuse at the divine tribunal, for a servant doing what was wrong, that his master commanded him to do it. Servants ought, however, to take care not to withhold obedience to a just command, from a pretended regard to conscience, when the true cause of their non-compliance is their sloth or self-indulgence. In such a case there is a double guilt contracted. The human master is disobeyed, and the Divine Master is insulted. There is a shocking union of dishonesty and impiety.

A master has, can have, no right to command what is impracticable, what is not in the servant's power; and therefore, in such cases, the servant is under no obligation to obedience. The Israelites were not to blame when they did not obey Pharaoh, commanding them to make bricks, when he withheld from them straw. There is nothing wrong in a servant refusing to attempt what he knows to be an impossibility, or what he is aware cannot be done, or attempted to be done, without materially injuring him. It is quite possible, indeed, that a servant may pretend incapacity for a particular piece of service, when what is wanting is not power but will; but no Christian servant will ever act in this way, and masters ought to be careful not to impose any unreasonable burdens,—acting always on that rule of our Lord, which, if carefully attended to, would keep everything in social life right: "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."²

Masters have no right to demand obedience in matters

¹ Rom. xiv. 12.

² Matt. vii. 12.

that do not fall within the limits of the agreement entered into with the servant; and of course servants are under no obligation to yield obedience in such cases. At the same time, servants of a right disposition will not, where the comfort of the family is obviously concerned, be very nice in measuring the precise limits of the appropriate sphere of service, and will conscientiously guard against making their freedom from obligation in this matter a cloak for sloth or ill-temper.

With these exceptions, servants are bound to obey their masters in all things. A servant must not trifle with or disobey a command, because *he* thinks it refers to a matter of but little moment. That is a subject in which he is not at all called to judge; and what he thinks of little importance, may be, in his master's estimation, and in reality, a matter of the greatest importance. Nor is difference of opinion, though the servant may be right, nor disinclination to the service required, to be considered as affording any reason for disobedience. A servant may, without any violation of duty, offer his opinion to his master, if he do it respectfully; nay, duty may in some cases require him to do so; but he is never to forget, that it is not his judgment, but his master's, that is ultimately to determine the matter, and this even although his master assign no satisfactory reason, or no reason at all.

This obedience, which is due by servants to their masters, ought to be characterized by respectfulness, faithfulness, diligence, and cheerfulness. A rude, forward, assuming behaviour, is exceedingly unbecoming in servants. The divine command is, that Christian servants, even in the case of their masters being heathens, "count them worthy of all honour," "not answering again:" "and if they are believers, that they do not despise them, because they are brethren."¹—Fidelity must also characterize the

¹ Tit. ii. 9; 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.

Christian servant. With regard to the time, and the property, and the reputation of his master, he must be scrupulously faithful. He must guard these as if they were his own. There must be "no purloining, but a showing all good fidelity."—Diligence is a third character which should distinguish the obedience of the Christian servant. All trifling, sauntering, and loitering should be avoided; and they should not be "eye-servants, as men-pleasers," but "diligent in business," "as the servants of God."—And finally, they should be cheerful in their obedience. Few things are more unworthy of a Christian servant than that mulish surly obstinacy, which Solomon so graphically describes when he says: "He is not to be corrected by words; for though he understand, yet will he not answer." The Apostle Paul enjoins Christian servants, "with goodwill to do service, as to the Lord, and not to man." This forms the most important part of the Christian servant's duty to obey the commands of his master.

(2.) Under the general head "subjection," however, is also included submission to the appointments of his master. The economy of the household is to be directed by the master; and where these arrangements in no degree interfere with divine appointments, and are not precluded by express stipulation, the servant must submit to them, though they may be in many respects disagreeable to him. The hours of rising and retiring to rest,—the quality, and to a certain extent the quantity, of sustenance, and a vast variety of other arrangements,—must to a great extent depend on the will of the master; and it is an important though sometimes not a very easy part of the Christian servant's duty, to submit to these without murmuring, and not permit them to fret the temper, so as to unfit for the cheerful and principled obedience which the law of Christ requires.

The manner in which the duty of subjection should be performed, the temper in which obedience and submission are to be yielded, comes now to be considered. "Servants, be subject to your masters in all fear." It has been common to consider these words as descriptive of that respectful feeling which servants should cherish towards their own masters, and to which we have already alluded. I apprehend, however, that the fear here referred to is not the fear of man in any of its forms, but the fear of God. The phrase "all fear," according to the idiom of the New Testament, signifies a high, or the highest, degree of fear, as "all acceptance" is the highest degree of acceptance, "all wisdom" every kind and degree of wisdom; and it is not according to the genius of Christianity, nor indeed of revelation generally, to inculcate any high degree of fear of man. On the contrary, a leading object which they contemplate is to elevate the mind above the fear of man, and, by leading man to fear God, to free him from all other fear. "Who art thou," says the prophet, "that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as the grass?" "Be not afraid of them," says our Lord, "who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." "Be not afraid of their terror," says the apostle; "neither be ye troubled." The prophet says, "Sanctify the Lord in your heart, and let Him be your fear and your dread;" our Lord says, "Fear Him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him;" and his apostle repeats the injunction of the prophet, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts."¹

The fear of God is the temper in which Christians are to perform all their duties. They are "to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect

¹ Isa. li. 12; Luke xii. 4; Isa. viii. 13; Luke xii. 5; 1 Pet. iii. 14, 15.

holiness in the fear of God." They are to "submit themselves to one another in the fear of God."¹

The word "fear," without the adjunct "of the Lord," is certainly used in the New Testament to signify religious fear—fear which has God for its object. That is plainly its meaning when it is said, that "Noah, moved with fear, prepared an ark;" and when it is said, "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." That seems its meaning also, when the Corinthians are said to have received Titus "with fear and trembling;" and when Christians are commanded to "work out their own salvation," or rather, as we are disposed to think, to labour for one another's salvation, "with fear and trembling: for it is God who worketh in them, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."²

In the passage in Eph. vi. 5, parallel to that under consideration, the "fear and trembling" with which servants are to perform their duties, is strictly connected with, "in singleness of your heart, as to Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." And in Col. iii. 22, what in the passage just quoted is called "fear and trembling," is explained by the phrase "fearing God." Comparing all these passages together, I can scarcely doubt that "with all fear," in the passage before us, is equivalent to, with a deeply pious temper; and that this, too, is its meaning at the second verse of the next chapter, where "chaste conversation mingled with fear" is just, as I apprehend, chaste pious behaviour, purity obviously rising from piety.

Christian servants, then, in performing their duties, are to do them from a regard to the divine authority, depending

¹ 2 Cor. vii. 1; Eph. v. 21.

² Heb. xi. 7; 1 Pet. i. 17; 2 Cor. vii. 15; Phil. ii. 12. On the last of these passages—a difficult one, and generally, I think, misunderstood—Peirce's note deserves to be consulted.

on the divine assistance, looking forward to the divine tribunal, desirous above all things of the divine approbation; fearing lest in anything the divine disapprobation should be incurred. This is one of the many instances in which we find Christianity converting everything into religion, teaching men "to set the Lord always before them;" and in the most ordinary offices of life, "whether they eat, or drink, or whatsoever they do, to do all to the glory of God."¹

§ 3. *The duties of a particular class of Christian servants.*

Let us now turn our attention for a little to the view which the apostle gives us of the duty of a particular class of Christian servants, and of the motives which he employs to urge them to its performance. The servants he refers to are those who have not "good," kind, "and gentle masters," but "froward," perverse, unreasonable, rough, unkind masters. Now what is *their* duty? It is still to be subject, just as if they were good and gentle.

It is no part of a Christian's duty to enter into the service of a froward master, if he can make a better arrangement; nor to remain in his service any longer than engagement obliges, or other circumstances require; and it is not wrong for a Christian servant to avail himself of all the means which the law of his country furnishes him with, to protect himself from injury and ill-usage from a froward master. But the apostle supposes the Christian servant, or slave, in the providence of God, placed under a froward master. Even in countries where the interests of servants are much better cared for by law than in the age and country referred to by the apostle, servants who have froward masters have often a great deal of suffering to submit to from unreasonable commands and arrangements, and unkind overbearing

¹ Ps. xvi. 8; 1 Cor. x. 31.

tempers, that no law can protect them from; and this was the case to an immeasurably greater degree among those to whom this epistle was directed.

Now, what was their duty? was there any relaxation in the precept, "Be subject?" None in the least. The unkind, irritating behaviour of the master is not to be sustained as an excuse for evading or disobeying his commands, nor even for yielding a grudging obedience: the hardships of the situation are to be patiently submitted to while they continue; and there is to be no attempt to lessen or remove them by neglecting or violating relative duty. This makes us see how necessary it is for the Christian servant to do his duty "with all fear," in a pious spirit, from a regard to God's authority; feeling that though the commands of his master are in themselves harsh and unreasonable, it is a wise and good command that requires him, in his circumstances, to be subject to his master within the limits already described; that though the yoke of the earthly master is oppressive, the yoke of the Master in heaven is reasonable.

§ 4. *Motives to the discharge of these duties.*

This duty of cheerful patient obedience to harsh and unreasonable masters is a very difficult one, and therefore the apostle enforces it by very powerful motives. These are two: first, patient endurance of undeserved suffering is of high estimation in the sight of God; and secondly, it is a part of that conformity to the image of God's Son, to which Christians are called, and to secure which was one great design of the sacrifice of God's Son. Let us look at these two motives in their order.

(1.) *Patient endurance of undeserved wrong enforced by the consideration that it is "acceptable to God."*

The first is stated in these words: "For this is thank-

worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully; for what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is ¹acceptable with God." The Christian servant under a froward master is described as "suffering wrongfully." He does his duty faithfully and cheerfully, yet he does not receive the kind treatment his conduct merits; he may not be treated *illegally*, so as that his master lays himself open to punishment, but he may be made to endure a great deal of severe suffering within these limits. That may take place, often does take place, even now, and in this country, where the rights of servants are better understood and more effectually protected than in most countries; and must have taken place to a much greater degree in ages and countries where heathenism and slavery prevailed, and where even the civil rights of hired servants were much more limited than they are with us.

When the Christian servant acted in character, though suffering wrongfully, he "endured grief;" that is, not merely felt the uneasiness his master's treatment of him naturally produced, but bore it meekly and patiently. The word "endure" is employed in the same sense as when it is said, "Moses endured, as seeing him who is invisible;" "We count them happy that endure;" "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation," that is, trial.² There is neither merit nor demerit in merely suffering. It is the manner in which we suffer that deserves praise or blame.

Now, says the apostle, a Christian servant conscientiously doing his duty to a froward master, bears patiently the unkind and injurious treatment he receives from him, "for

¹ *Χάρις παρὰ Θεοῦ*. Imitatur Petrus phrasin, quam ipse, recens discipulus, ex Domino audierat. Luke vi. 32, 55.—BENGEL.

² Heb. xi. 27; James v. 11, i. 12.

conscience towards God." Some have supposed that these words mean that the bad treatment of the froward master was persecution because the servant was a Christian. That this might be, often was, the case, we cannot doubt; but that is not the idea conveyed by the words. The statement is, not that he suffers wrongfully for conscience towards God; but, for conscience towards God he "endures," patiently suffers grief. He submits patiently to suffering, from an enlightened regard to the character and will of God. He believes that he is in his present circumstances by the providence of God; he knows God requires him to bear the evils he is subject to with fortitude and patience; he believes that God will support him under them, in due time deliver him from them, and make them work for his good; and therefore he "endures" them. "Such a servant's obedience is not pinned to the goodness and equity of his master, but, when that fails, will subsist upon its own inward ground. This is the thing that makes sure and constant walking. It makes a man step even in the ways of God."¹

Now, says the apostle, a Christian servant acting in this way is an object of the complacent approbation of God. "This is thank-worthy," this is "acceptable with God;" there is glory in this. It is the same word that is rendered "thank-worthy" and "acceptable," and no good end is gained by varying the rendering. God regards with complacency the Christian servant who, from a regard to his will, from a trust in his character, quietly and patiently bears unprovoked wrong, and does not allow his master's unworthy behaviour to influence his discharge of his duty to him. And to every Christian the assurance that God looks with complacency on a particular course of conduct, is one of the most powerful motives which can be suggested

¹ Leighton.

for following it. Men may count you mean-spirited in submitting to such usage. God, who is infinitely wise, and whose approbation is of more importance than that of the whole universe of created beings, approves your conduct, counts your meekness true glory, and regards you with affectionate complacency. His eye rests benignantly on you. That far more than counterbalances the sour looks, and the harsh language, and the unkind treatment, of the froward master.

That such conduct, the patient endurance of undeserved suffering, is a proper object of complacent regard, the apostle shows, by contrasting it with the patient endurance of deserved suffering: "For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer ('for it' is a supplement, and should not have been inserted; for there is no reason to think the servants suffered *for* doing well, but only notwithstanding their doing well), ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God."

In these words the apostle meets the very natural thought: It is very hard to suffer when we deserve reward: we could receive merited chastisement without complaint,—we should feel that in that case complaint was unreasonable; but to endure undeserved, unprovoked, grief,—to meet with insult and outrage, instead of the kind treatment our dutiful conduct entitles us to, this is hard indeed. The apostle does not deny this; but he says, you are placed in circumstances in which you have an opportunity of drawing down upon yourselves a larger measure of the approbation of God, than had you been placed in what you might have thought better circumstances. Neither God nor man could have regarded with approbation your conduct in meriting chastisement. If, after meriting chastisement, you had submitted to it patiently, both God and man would have approved of your

conduct as what was fitting in the circumstances; but they would not have considered it as deserving of praise: the opposite kind of conduct, murmuring under chastisement incurred by fault, would have appeared most unreasonable and blameable. But God, and all good men who think along with God, will regard you with a high degree of affectionate complacency, if, under strong temptations to murmur, you “possess your souls in patience,” and instead of, in any degree, “rendering evil for evil,” endeavour to “overcome evil with good.”¹

The reason why such conduct is peculiarly acceptable to God is, that all undeserved suffering, endured patiently from religious motives, shows the submission of the mind and will to God. It is an embodiment of the soul of true religion, “Not my will, but thine be done. The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”²

It may be worth observing, in passing, that from the language used, it is plain that masters had then the power of corporal chastisement, and that they were not slack in using it: “If ye be buffeted for your faults.” All ranks of men, and especially the subordinate ones, have great cause to be thankful to Christianity, which not only changes the hearts of individuals, but mitigates and mellows the manners of communities. No master in our land can buffet a servant but at his peril.

This, then, is the first motive which the apostle urges on Christian servants to patient endurance of unmerited suffering from froward masters.

And is it not a powerful one? What the Christian would be at, is the praise of God. If he can secure that, is it not enough? As Archbishop Leighton says, “If men commend him not, he accounts it no loss, and little gain if they do. He is bound to a country where that coin goes not, and

¹ Luke xxi. 19; Rom. xii. 17, 21.

² John xviii. 11; Luke xxii. 43.

whither he cannot carry it; and therefore he gathers it not. That which he seeks in all is, that he may be approved and accepted of God, whose thanks to the least of those whom he accepts is no less than a crown of unfading glory. Not a poor servant that fears his name, and is obedient and patient for his sake, but will be thus rewarded. Not any cross that is taken, what way so ever it comes, as out of his hand, and carried patiently, yea, and welcomed and embraced for his sake, but he observes our so entertaining it. Not an injury which the meanest servant bears christianly but goes upon account with him, and he sets them so as that they bear much value through his esteem and way of reckoning them, though in themselves they are all less than nothing, as a worthless counter stands for hundreds or thousands, according to the place you set it in. Happy they who have to deal with such a Lord, and, be they servants or masters, are avowed servants to Him. When he comes, his reward will be with him."

The great principle which the apostle requires Christian servants to act from, in cheerfully doing the duties and enduring the hardships of their condition, is "conscience towards God." Submission to the divine will, respect to the divine authority, desire of the divine approbation, should be, and, if we are Christians, will be, the ruling principle of our conduct in all our actings and sufferings in life. To borrow the striking words of him whom in these discourses I so often quote, "Let us all, whether servants or not, set the Lord always before us, and study, with Paul, to have 'a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.' Let us apply constantly to our actions and to our inward thoughts the command of God. Let us walk by that rule abroad and at home, in our houses and in the several ways of our calling, as an exact workman, who is ever and anon applying his rule to his work, and squaring

it. Let us, from conscience towards God, do and suffer his will cheerfully in everything, being content that he should choose our condition and trials for us; only desirous to be assured that he has chosen us for his own, set us apart for himself, and secured for us 'the glorious liberty of the children of God,' and the full 'redemption of the purchased possession.'" Let us seek as our great object, "that whether we sleep or wake we may be accepted of him," and obtain at last the inheritance, as those who serve the Lord Christ. Let us steadily walk in the way that leads to this inheritance, overlooking this momentary scene and all things in it, accounting it a very indifferent matter what our outward state here be in this moment, provided we may be happy in eternity. Whether we be high or low here, bond or free, imports but little, seeing all these differences will so quickly be at an end, and no traces of them found for ever. It is so with individual men in the grave: you may distinguish the greater from the less, the monarch from the slave, by their tombs, but not by their dust; and yet a little while in the reckoning of the Eternal, and all these external distinctions will pass away,—the palace and the cottage equally disappearing, while "the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up." Yet, then shall the "righteous shine forth in the kingdom of their Father," and their lustre shall be proportioned to their righteousness. When all earthly splendour has vanished in darkness, patient endurance of suffering for conscience sake shall be found unto glory extinguishable; and the slave who for conscience to God, in circumstances of peculiar trial, "enduring grief, suffering wrongfully," proved that the mind of Christ was in him, and that he had learned to walk in the steps of the example he has left behind him, shall receive tokens of a degree of divine approbation, which may be withheld from many

who, placed in what men reckoned far more enviable circumstances, have not attained to the same measure of conformity to him who is "the brightness of glory," "the excellency of beauty," the "first-born among many brethren."

(2.) *Patient endurance of undeserved suffering enforced from a consideration of Christ's sufferings.*

I go on now to turn your attention to the second motive by which the apostle enforces the duty of Christian servants patiently enduring undeserved suffering. That motive is stated in the following words: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." The motive is derived from the sufferings of Christ, and may so far be considered a simple one; but as these sufferings are plainly, in different parts of the text, viewed in different aspects, first as exemplary and then as expiatory, it must also, if we would feel its full force, be considered as a complex one. "Hereunto are ye called." Patient, undeserved suffering, is a portion of that conformity to Christ to which, as Christians, ye are called: "Hereunto are ye called." Patient, undeserved suffering, is a part of that universal holiness to which ye are called, and to secure which was, so far as relates to man subjectively considered, the great ultimate object of our Lord's expiatory sufferings. The motive is presented in the first

of these aspects in the 21st, 22d, and 23d verses, and in the second of them in the 24th and 25th. Let us attend to them in their order. .

1. *Christians called to patient suffering as a part of conformity to Christ.*

“Hereunto were ye called,” or, to this were ye called. The first question that requires to be answered here is, to what does the apostle refer in these words? What is it that he represents these Christian servants whom he is addressing as called to? Some have supposed that it is suffering for the cause of Christ—suffering on account of being Christians; and that the force of what he says may be thus stated, ‘Ye are called to suffer for Christ; and it is very reasonable that ye should be so called, for HE suffered for you.’ There can be no doubt that the Christians of that age were generally called to suffer for Christ, and in a remarkable manner and degree; there can be as little doubt that it is a very good reason why Christians of every age should suffer for Christ, that HE suffered for them. But a little attention will make it evident that it is not suffering merely for the cause of Christ, but patient, undeserved suffering, whatever might be the occasion, that is here referred to; and that the motive is not the general statement, “Christ suffered for us,” but “Christ has set us an example of the patient endurance of undeserved suffering.”

The substance of the apostle’s argument may be thus stated: ‘To this, even the patient endurance of sufferings wrongfully inflicted, are ye called as Christians, and to this from a regard to the will of God.’ And how does it appear, that as Christians they are *called* to this? They were called to be “conformed to the image of God’s Son;” and in particular, they were called to “the fellowship of

his sufferings," to suffer with him, like him, "in order to their being glorified together with him."¹ "He left them an example, that they should follow his steps." He suffered; his sufferings were undeserved sufferings; he suffered for *them*, not for himself; and he sustained these undeserved sufferings most patiently, and from regard to the will of God. "When reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously." Admitting these premises, it follows that Christian servants, exposed to undeserved sufferings, should not allow these sufferings to interfere with the discharge of their duties, but should bear them without murmuring, in submission to the divine will. Let us look a little more closely at the facts here stated, the general principles here laid down, and the bearing which the two in connection have on the duty of Christian servants exposed to unmerited suffering from froward masters, and of all Christians exposed to unmerited suffering from whatever cause.

And first, Of the facts here stated. The first of these is, "Christ suffered."² Our Lord, on assuming human nature, became capable of suffering; and having become a man born of woman, his days were "few, and full of trouble." The sufferings which he endured were, in number, variety, and severity, such as no human being ever experienced. He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "His countenance was more marred than that of any man, and his form than that of the sons of men."³ The language which the prophet Jeremiah puts in the mouth of desolated

¹ Rom. viii. 29; 1 Cor. i. 9; Phil. iii. 10.

² Petrus non exprimit *quod* Christus passus sit, sed simpliciter dicit Χριστὸς ἠπάθη, ut innuat, omne passionis genus Christum pro nobis tolerasse.—Jo. HUS.

³ Job xiv. 1; Isa. liii. 3, lii. 14.

Jerusalem might have been most appropriately used by him: "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow." The Captain of our salvation was made "perfect through suffering."¹

These sufferings were all unmerited—unmerited by him. They were richly merited by those for whom—on whose account, for whose benefit, in whose room—they were endured, but they were utterly undeserved by him. His desert was the highest degree of enjoyment of which his assumed nature was capable. When he suffered, he suffered for others, not for himself. Viewed in whatever light you please, his sufferings were undeserved from men. Viewed apart from the relation which, in glad compliance with the will of his Father, he stood to ill-deserving, hell-deserving sinners of the human race, they were undeserved from his Father.

The idea which is certainly intended to be suggested by the expression, "Christ suffered FOR us," is more fully brought out in the words that follow: "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." In this clause the words of the prophet Isaiah, in the fifty-third chapter of his prophecy, are certainly alluded to, if not directly quoted: "Who did no violence, neither was guile found in his mouth." It is scarcely possible to doubt that in these words there is a reference to the two charges which were brought against our Lord, and for which he was tried before the supreme civil and ecclesiastical courts of his country. Before the Roman government he was accused of "violence"—of "perverting the nation and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, stirring up all the people throughout all Jewry from Galilee to Jerusalem;"² and before the high priest and Sanhedrim he was accused of "guile"—of false

¹ Lam. i. 12; Heb. ii. 10.

² Luke xxiii. 5, 14.

doctrine in calling himself the Son of God, "making himself equal with God." The first charge his enemies so completely failed in substantiating, that the Roman governor, peculiarly sensitive on such a subject, and likely to have his suspicions easily roused and not easily allayed, after the closest examination, declared, "I find no fault in this man,"¹ that is, 'Nothing even approximating to the charge brought against him has been proved.' And as to the second, there needed no proof that he made such claims; he readily admitted this: but he accompanied his claims with abundant evidence, that in making them there was "no guile in his mouth;" that he spoke nothing but the truth. All the sufferings, then, which were inflicted on him, as if he had been a perpetrator of crime, a teacher of falsehood, were undeserved sufferings.

But while this seems the direct reference of the words, they are without doubt intended to convey the idea of the perfect innocence, the absolute excellence, of our Lord. Actions and words are the expression of thoughts and feelings; and he who neither in deed nor in word offends, may well be presumed to be a perfect man. It has been truly and beautifully said, that "all Christ's words and actions flowed from a pure spring that had nothing defiled in it: other men may seem clean as long as they are unstirred, but move and trouble them, and the mud arises. But in his case, though stirred and agitated to the utmost, the deep fountain of his mind and heart remained, though troubled, perfectly pure, and sent forth nothing but the most pellucid streams." Men tried him, devils tried him, God tried him; and the result always was, "He did no sin, no guile was found in his mouth." Nothing could convict him of sin. There was no fault in him. He was, indeed, "such a high priest as became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate

¹ John v. 18; Luke xxii. 70, xxiii. 4.

from sinners." "Thou art all fair; there is no spot in thee."¹

The third fact is, He endured all these undeserved sufferings with the utmost patience. "When reviled, he did not revile again; when he suffered, he threatened not." He patiently "endured" the "so great contradiction of sinners against himself," to which he was exposed. In many cases he maintained a meek silence; at other times he replied to their upbraidings and reproaches with calm reasonings, affectionate expostulations, and benignant prayers. When called a Sabbath-breaker, he replied by telling them that his Father, as well as himself, worked on the Sabbath-day; asking them whether it was lawful to do good or evil on that day; putting them in mind, that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath;" and bidding them "go and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." When charged with casting out devils by the power of Beelzebub, the prince of devils, he merely rebutted the shocking imputation by showing its absurdity. When upbraided as a companion of the dissolute and worthless, he justified the conduct on which they grounded the foul imputation, by saying, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." When charged with blasphemy for saying to the man sick of the palsy, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," he merely directed their attention to the effect of his words, as containing a sufficient vindication of them. When they calumniated him as an impostor and seducer of the people, he made no sharp answer, but appealed to the works which he had done among them, as abundant evidence of the truth of all he said, as proving that he had not come of himself, but had been sent of his Father, God. When they took

¹ Heb. vii. 26; Cant. iv. 7.

up stones to throw at him, all that he said was, "Many good works I have showed you of my Father; for which of these works do ye stone me?" When he was rudely addressed, inhumanly treated by a menial while at the bar of the Sanhedrim, his reply was, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" And when, in the extremity of his suffering, the high priests, the soldiers, and the populace vied with each other who should most embitter his dying agonies by scornful taunts and bitter revilings, they could draw forth from him neither reproach nor threatening. With a heart full of pity, he turned from them to his Father, and urged the only palliating circumstance in their crime, as an argument for their pardon: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."¹

Well does Archbishop Leighton say: "None ever did so little deserve revilings; none ever could have said so much in his own just defence, and to the just reproach of his enemies, and yet in both he preferred silence; none could ever threaten so heavy things as he could against his enemies, and have made good all that he threatened, and yet no such thing was ever heard of him. The heavens and the earth, as it were, spoke their resentment of the dishonour done to him who made them. The darkened sun, the shaking earth, the rending rocks, uttered rebuke, and denounced vengeance; but He held his peace. He was silent; or if he spoke, it was to show how far he was from revilings and threatenings."

The only other fact mentioned is, that when Christ patiently endured unmerited sufferings, he did so from a regard to the will of his Father. It was not stupidity, it was not stoicism, it was enlightened, affectionate piety,

¹ John v. 17; Mark ii. 27; Matt. xii. 26; Luke v. 23, 31; John x. 32, xviii. 23; Luke xxiii. 34.

which produced this patient, unresisting, uncomplaining suffering. "He committed himself to him who judgeth righteously."¹

He looked above all second causes to the Great First Cause. He saw all coming forth from Him who is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." He saw in the events which occurred to him the manifestation of His will; and fully confident of his wisdom, and righteousness, and faithfulness, and benignity, he meekly submitted to them, persuaded that He would do all things well. "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" "Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour? For this purpose came I to this hour. Father, glorify thine own name." "Not my will, but thine be done."² He was persuaded that both HE and his righteous cause, the cause of the divine glory, and the salvation of man, were

¹ It deserves to be noticed *here* that the Vulgate renders these words "tradebat judicanti se injuste," and that the versions from the Vulgate give corresponding renderings. Roman Catholic critics and interpreters, who are generally unwilling to acknowledge errors in a version pronounced by the Council of Trent "authentica," have attempted to defend the rendering on the ground that it exhibits a very good sense, supposing the reference to be to Pilate. Though it were to give what might be thought a better sense than the "textus receptus," that is no evidence against the testimony of the Codd. Now all the Greek Codd. read with the "textus receptus." The citations of the Greek fathers are also coincident. With the exception of one or two cases in the Latin fathers, which may have been interpolations, they also agree with the T. R. It is not wonderful that Father Simon—very acute, but not very scrupulous—should support the Vulgate; but it is remarkable to find Causabon *ὁ πᾶν* taking the same side. Estius, one of the most judicious and candid of the Roman Catholic commentators, says—"librariorum incuria in Codd. Latt. legitur *injuste* pro *juste*." There has been supposed to be a reference here to Jer. xi. 19, 20. If any passage of the Old Testament was in the apostle's mind, we should rather think of Ps. vii. 8, xxvi. 1, xxxv. 24; especially the last, as the 19th verse of that Psalm is referred to our Lord by himself. John xv. 25.

² John xviii. 11, xii. 27, 28.

safe, perfectly safe, in the hands of "him who judgeth righteously." He believed, and he did not "make haste." His own deliverance and glorious exaltation, the salvation of the millions for whom he was pouring out his soul unto death, and the merited punishment of the obstinate opposers of truth and righteousness, he was persuaded were as certain as if they had already taken place. They would all take place at the time and in the manner that seemed best to infinite wisdom and holiness and benignity; and he was willing to suffer as severely and as long as was requisite to the gaining of these grand objects, according to the arrangements of Him who alone has wisdom. His temper is strikingly described in the words of one of his servants, who had much of the mind that was in him: "Lord, what thou wilt: when thou wilt: how thou wilt."¹ These are the facts, then, with regard to our Lord stated in the text: He suffered; his sufferings were undeserved; these undeserved sufferings were borne with patience; this patience originated in submission to the will of God.

Let us now turn our attention a little to the general principles here laid down. These are two. In thus patiently enduring undeserved suffering from a regard to the divine will, our Lord set an example to his people; and to the imitation of this example Christians are expressly called.

The first of these principles is stated in these words: "Christ *also* suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." 'Ye servants, who have forward masters, are suffering; but remember ye are not the only sufferers: Christ also suffered; suffered undeservedly, suffered patiently, suffered piously, leaving you an example that ye should follow in his steps. He did all this with the intention of showing you what you might expect, and how you should behave.'

¹ Baxter.

It is quite plain, that within certain clearly definable limits, our Lord's character and conduct is the great exemplar after which his followers are to fashion theirs. They are commanded to have the mind in them that was in him. They are to think as he thought: they are to feel as he felt: they are to "walk as he also walked." They are to be "in the world as he was in the world." "To follow him," is the comprehensive term which describes all the varied duties of discipleship. In running the Christian race, we are constantly to "look to him" as the exemplar as well as the rewarder.¹

Whatever in qualification or function belonged to him as a person invested with an office altogether peculiar, that of Mediator between God and man, the Saviour of sinners, and possessed of supernatural powers, fitting him for accomplishing the great ends for which he was invested with that office, is obviously not to be considered as exemplary. Within that circle none must attempt to walk but he. It would be folly and impiety to attempt to expiate sin, either our own or other men's; or, without a divine commission, to work miracles;² or to do what, when done by our Lord, obviously went on the supposition of his possessing a species of authority and knowledge which do not, which cannot, belong to his followers—to forgive sins, or to pronounce on the spiritual state and eternal destiny of individual men.

But in the great leading principles of our Lord's conduct, supreme love to God, disinterested love to man, there can be no doubt that he is our exemplar; and, supposing him placed in our circumstances, we are always to think, and feel, and act, as he would have thought, and felt, and acted.

¹ Phil. ii. 5; 1 John ii. 6, iv. 17; John xii. 26; Heb. xii. 2.

² "Wherein ought we to follow the Lord's example? In working miracles? No, surely. But in this, in being meek and lowly of heart; in loving not only our friends, but also our enemies."—CAESARIUS.

There may be some difficulty in certain cases, though they are of rare occurrence, in saying, whether a particular action of our Lord, recorded in the evangelical history, is to be, to the letter, imitated by us; but there can be no difficulty in the case before us: for the mode of conduct referred to is just the natural expression of those great principles of love to God, and love to man, by which, in common with Christ, all Christians should be animated and guided; and we have the express declaration of an inspired writer, that in submitting to undeserved suffering, and in enduring it patiently and piously, it was the intention of our Lord to exhibit to his people a picture of the trials which they might expect to meet with, and a pattern of the manner in which they ought to sustain these trials. This fact of itself, then, sufficiently shows that Christians are bound not only to admire, but to imitate, their Lord, in meekly and piously submitting to undeserved suffering.

This is made still more evident by the second general principle laid down in the text. To this meek, pious submission to suffering, in imitation of Christ, Christians are expressly called. "Hereunto," to this, "are ye called;" that is, when you were called to be Christians, you were distinctly told that you should meet with suffering, with undeserved suffering, and that you would be expected to bear it in a meek, pious spirit. What says our Lord? "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me." "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word which I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours

also. In the world ye shall have tribulation. These things have I spoken to you, that ye should not be offended," stumbled, when they come to pass; thinking it strange, as if some strange thing had happened to you. "Behold, I tell you before."¹ And what say the apostles? They assure Christians that it is "through much tribulation that they are to enter into the kingdom;" and that "all who will," who are determined to, "live godly in this world, must suffer persecution." They bid them "count it all joy when they are brought into manifold trials;" tell them that it is needful that they "for a season be in heaviness through these manifold trials;" caution them against counting "fiery trials strange things," and exhort them when they meet with these to "rejoice that they are partakers of Christ's sufferings." And as to the manner in which these afflictions are to be borne, this is their calling: "Let patience have its perfect work." "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." "Be patient, stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."²

Having thus shortly illustrated the facts stated, 'Christ suffered, he suffered undeservedly, he suffered patiently, he suffered piously;' and the general principles stated, 'In thus meekly and piously enduring undeserved suffering, Christ has set an example to his followers which they should imitate; and, To this imitation of Christ's example in meek, pious endurance of undeserved suffering, they are expressly called;' we proceed to show the bearing that the two, taken in connection, have on the enforcement of the duty which the apostle is here enjoining on Christian servants in peculiar circumstances. As there is nothing either in the duty enjoined or in the motives enforcing it, peculiar to

¹ John xv. 18-20, xvi. 33.

² Acts xiv. 22; 2 Tim. iii. 12; 1 Pet. i. 6, iv. 12, 13; James i. 4; 1 Pet. v. 6.

the situation of servants, as both are equally applicable to all Christians when exposed to undeserved suffering from their fellow-men, it may serve a good purpose in the succeeding observations to treat the subject in this more extended view.

It clearly follows, from the facts stated and the principles laid down, that Christians need not wonder, and ought not to be discouraged, when they meet with undeserved suffering from the world; that they should be careful that all the sufferings they are exposed to from the world be indeed undeserved sufferings; and that they ought to submit to these undeserved sufferings in a spirit of meek forgiveness towards those who inflict them, and of humble, hopeful resignation to HIM by whose appointment they are subjected to them.

I observe, then, in the first place, that Christians need not wonder, and ought not to be discouraged, when they meet with undeserved sufferings from the world. Christ suffered—suffered without deserving suffering—suffered from those from whom kindness, not injury, had been merited by him. If Christ thus suffered, is it strange that Christians should thus suffer? So far as they deserve the name, they are like Christ; they have his Spirit; they speak like him; they act like him. The world in the midst of which they live is substantially the same as the world in the midst of which he lived. How can they expect then to be otherwise treated in it, or by it, than he was? Can they deserve ill-usage less than he did? Can they merit kindness more than he did? What is the unreasonableness and unkindness implied in treating even the best of them ill, compared with that implied in treating him ill? This ill-treatment by the world, without a good reason, is one of the proofs that we belong to Christ. If the world love us out and out, it is a proof that we are its own; for the world

thus loves none but its own. "Can the Christian choose but to have the same common friends and enemies with his Lord? Could he be gratified with the friendship of that world which hated and murdered his Master, and, if He were here, would hate and murder him over again? Would he have nothing but kindness and ease, where Christ had nothing but enmity and trouble? Would he not rather refuse and disdain to be so unlike the Lord?"

- "There is a family on earth
Whose Father fills a throne;
But, though a seed of heavenly birth,
On earth they're little known.
Where'er they meet the public eye,
They feel the public scorn;
For men their fairest claims deny,
And count them basely born.
- "But 'tis the King who reigns above
That claims them for his own:
The favoured objects of his love,
And destined to a throne.
Were honours evident to sense,
Their portion here below,
The world would do them reverence,
And all their claims allow.
- "But when the King himself was here,
His claims were set at nought:
Would they another lot prefer?
Rejected be the thought.
No; they will tread, while here below,
The path their Master trod;
Content all honour to forego
But that which comes from God."¹

I remark, in the second place, that Christians should be careful that all the sufferings they are exposed to from the world be indeed undeserved sufferings. Christ suffered for

¹ Kelly.

us, not for himself : "He did no sin, no guile was found in his mouth." His sufferings were, in the sense we have already explained, undeserved sufferings ; and in thus suffering, he set us an example, that we should follow his steps. Every sufferer has not fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. He who brings suffering on himself by his folly and sin, manifests not likeness, but unlikeness, to the Saviour. He does not follow in his steps. He travels in a different, in an opposite, path from that in which he travelled. A Christian has fellowship with Christ in his sufferings, "fills up what is behind of the sufferings of the Lord Jesus,"¹ only when his sufferings are like Christ's, "sufferings for righteousness' sake," or at any rate sufferings unprovoked, undeserved. All suffering, as coming from God, is deserved. The holiest man on earth, though he should be the most afflicted, is punished less than his iniquities deserve. But Christians must take care, that, so far as men are concerned, their sufferings are undeserved sufferings. Christian servants who have froward masters are to take care that, if buffeted, they be not buffeted for their faults. Christians must take care that, however much evil their enemies may do them, they may have no evil thing to say truly of them. They must so conduct themselves as that their enemies, like Daniel's, shall not be able to find anything against them, "except concerning the law of their God."² None of them must "suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or even as a busybody in other men's matters." When they suffer, let it be as Christians, innocently, undeservedly. Then shall they have no cause to be ashamed, but rather to "glorify God on this behalf." Being "partakers of Christ's sufferings," they may well "rejoice ; that when his glory is revealed, they may be glad also with exceeding joy."³

¹ Col. i. 24.² Dan. vi. 5.³ 1 Pet. iv. 13.

I observe, in the third place, that Christians should submit to the undeserved sufferings to which they are exposed in a meek, patient, forgiving spirit. When Christ suffered, not on his own account, when he suffered undeservedly, having done no sin, no guile having been found in his mouth; "when reviled, he did not revile again; when he suffered, he threatened not;" and in this he hath "set us an example, that we should follow his steps." We do not act like Christians, for we do not act like Christ, when we make the fact that our sufferings are undeserved an excuse for impatience under them, or revengeful thoughts and wishes in reference to their authors. Christians can be said to have fellowship with Christ in their undeserved sufferings, only when they endure them, as he endured his, and requires them to endure theirs; when they "love their enemies, do good to them that hate them, bless them that curse them, and pray for them who persecute them and despitefully use them;" when they do not seek to avenge themselves, when they are not "overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."¹ Such is the course Christians should follow, for such is the law, such the example, of their Lord. And there is an additional reason, very touchingly urged by the apostle in his Epistle to Titus, why they should thus be "gentle, showing all meekness to all men," even those who are most unreasonably unjust and wicked to them; "for they themselves were sometime foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."²

I observe, in the last place, Christians should patiently endure the unmerited sufferings to which they are exposed, in a spirit of pious resignation. Christ, when he personally submitted to undeserved sufferings, "committed himself to him who judgeth righteously;" and in this too he hath "set

¹ Matt. v. 44; Rom. xii. 21.

² Tit. iii. 2, 3.

us an example, that we should follow his steps." In his sufferings he saw the appointment of his Father. However unjust these sufferings were as coming from man, they were just as coming from him. They were the expression of holy displeasure at the sins of men, whose place he, by his own most voluntary consent, occupied. In number and severity they were just what he willed them to be; he believed he would sustain him under them, deliver him from them, and make them the means of fully accomplishing him as the Captain of salvation; and he committed himself unreservedly into HIS hands, persuaded that he would do all things well.

In like manner, Christians are to see in the men of the world who treat them unjustly and unkindly, "the hand," "the staff," "the rod" of Jehovah; and of all the afflictions produced by their instrumentality to say, "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, wonderful in counsel, excellent in working." They are to recollect, that though they have not deserved this; though they may have deserved the very reverse, from those who maltreat them, they deserve this, far more than this, at the hand of God: "It is of the Lord's mercies that they are not consumed." They are to remember, that both as creatures and redeemed creatures he has an undoubted right entirely to manage their affairs. They are to believe that he orders all things well and wisely; that he "will not suffer them to be tried above what they are able to bear;" that he will sustain them under their afflictions; that he will make them work together for their good, work out for them "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And under the influence of these convictions, they, when suffering according to the will of God, like their Lord who, when suffering according to the will of God, "committed himself to him who judgeth righteously," are to "commit the keeping of their souls to

God in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.”¹ Thus have I endeavoured to bring out the force of the motive to patient endurance of undeserved suffering on the part of Christians, grounded on that example of our Lord, to the imitation of which they are called in their high and holy calling.

2. *Christians called to patient suffering, as a constituent part of that holiness, to secure which was a great end of Christ's expiatory sufferings.*

But the apostle represents our Lord's sufferings not only as exemplary, but also as expiatory ; and he represents them in the latter as well as the former aspect, as affording powerful motives to the performance of the duties which he is enjoining. He says not only, ‘Perform the duty of patient pious endurance of undeserved suffering, “for hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps;”’ but also, ‘Perform this duty, “for hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for you, himself bearing your sins in his own body on the tree.”’ “That Jesus Christ is, in doing and suffering, our supreme and matchless example, and that he came to be so, is a truth ; but that he is nothing further, and came for no other end, is a high point of falsehood : for how should man be enabled to learn and follow that example, unless there was more in Christ ? and what would become of that great reckoning of disobedience that man stands guilty of ? No, these are too narrow. He came to bear our sins in his own body on the tree—a body prepared for him, and given to him to bear this burden,—to do this as the will of the Father, to stand for us in the room of all offerings and sacrifices. And by that will,

¹ Isa. viii. 5 ; Ps. xvii. 14 ; 1 Cor. x. 13 ; 2 Cor. iv. 17 ; 1 Pet. v. 19.

says the apostle, we are sanctified, by the offering of the body of Christ once for all.”¹

To explain the statement made by the apostle respecting the sufferings of Christ, viewed as expiatory, and to show its force as a motive to the discharge of the duties which he is enjoining, are the objects I have in view in the remaining part of this discourse.

The statement made by the apostle naturally divides itself into three parts: When Christ suffered for us, he himself bore our sins in his own body on the tree; when he thus suffered, it was that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness; and the effect of this is, that we are healed by his stripes: we, who were like sheep going astray, are thus brought back to the Shepherd and Bishop of souls. The first part of the statement describes the nature; the second, the design; the third, the consequences, of our Lord's sufferings for us. Let us attend to these important topics in their order.

And first, let us attend to the account which the text gives us of the NATURE of our Lord's sufferings. When he suffered for us, “he himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” These words plainly intimate that the sufferings of our Lord were *penal*, that is, they were the manifestation of the displeasure of God against sin: when he suffered, “he bare sin;”—that they were *vicarious*, that is, they were the manifestation of the displeasure of God against the sin, not of the sufferer, but of men in whose place He stood, for he had no sin: “he bare our sins;”—and that they were *expiatory*; that is, they were intended for, and effectual for, the purpose of expiating, or of making atonement for, the sins on account of which they were inflicted, laying a foundation for the pardon of these sins in a way consistent with the perfections of the divine character

¹ Leighton.

and the principles of the divine government. He bare them that he might bear them away.

I need not say that "the tree" here means the cross, the accursed tree, just as we call the gibbet the fatal tree. I am not sure that our version of these words, "he bare our sins on the tree," fully and exactly brings out the apostle's idea. The thought which the English words naturally suggest is this: Christ bare our sins *on* the cross. He suffered the penalty of our sins, and made expiation for them, when he was crucified, and by being crucified. Now crucifixion, and the sufferings endured under crucifixion, were no doubt a part of the penalty of our sins, a part of the price of our salvation; but they were only a part of it. The inward agony of Gethsemane, equally with the pain and the shame of Calvary, was the payment of the ransom of man. The whole of our Lord's sufferings, from the moment he became capable of suffering, till the moment he became incapable of suffering, when on the cross he gave up the ghost, were that adequate expression of the divine displeasure against sin, which reconciles the exercise of mercy with the claims of justice; and he as really, though not so obviously, bare our sins when he lay a helpless infant in the manger in Bethlehem, as when he hung, an agonized man, on the accursed tree. The words admit, perhaps require, certainly have received, from some of the ablest scholars and the soundest divines, a slightly different rendering, which brings out this important truth: "He himself bare our sins in his own body *to* the tree."¹ It is the same word that in the verse before us is rendered *on*, that in the following verse is rendered *to*: "Ye are returned *to* the Shepherd and Bishop of souls." This, then, we apprehend,

¹ Ἐν τῷ ξύλῳ. Vide Robinson on Ἐνί, iii. 6 (α) and (β). Matt. iii. 13, xii. 28, xxii. 34; Acts iv. 26; Luke iii. 2; 2 Thess. i. 10; 1 Pet. iii. 12. Answering to the Heb. לָנֶפֶשׁ.—Ps. xxxiv. 16, Sept.

is the apostle's statement, "He himself bare our sins in his own body *to* the tree."¹

There are two questions which must be answered in order to our fully apprehending the meaning of these words: What are we to understand by our Lord, when he suffered for us, "bearing our sins to the tree?" and what is the import of the phrase, "He himself in his own body" bare our sins to the tree?

Let us then inquire, what we are to understand by our Lord's bearing our sins to the cross. Our sins are represented here as a burden which had been laid on our Lord, and which he bore to the cross, where he got rid of the burden. Now, what are we to understand by "our sins?" what by their being laid on our Lord? what by his bearing them, bearing them to the cross?

"Our sins" here are our liabilities to punishment on account of our violations of the divine law, and the necessary consequences of these liabilities; in other words, guilt in the sense of binding over to punishment, and punishment itself. "Our sins," meaning by that phrase our acts of violation of the divine law, cannot by any power, not even that of God, be transferred from us and laid on another. It must always be true that we committed them: it never can be true that another committed them. Neither can our sinfulness, our culpability, our blameworthiness, in committing those acts be removed from us or transferred to another: it must always be true that *we*, we alone, were to blame for our violation of the divine law. It never can

¹ "This passage may be referred to in illustration of the exegetical importance of carefully attending to the exact signification of the Greek prepositions, both separately and in composition. *Who his own self* (ἀνήνυσεν) *carried up our sins on his own body* (ἐπὶ) *to the cross*, so as to fasten them upon it (comp. Col. ii. 14). 'Επὶ τὸ ξύλον denotes motion to the object, so as to rest upon it."—*Dr Black on the Exegetical Study of the Holy Scriptures*, p. 61.

be true that in this sense our guilt can be transferred to another ; but liability to punishment, and the punishment to which we are liable, may be transferred from us, and laid on another ; and the statement in the text obviously goes on the supposition that “ our sins,” in this sense, were laid on our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now what do we mean when we say that our sins in this sense were laid on Christ ? We mean, that by a divine appointment, Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, the God-man, was, with his own most free consent, subjected to the liabilities to punishment which man’s sins had incurred ; and to the punishment, that is, to the evils manifestative of the divine displeasure at the sin of man, which necessarily rose out of these liabilities. This is the truth which is taught us when it is said, that “ we all like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way,” and God made to meet on his righteous Servant “ the iniquities”—the ill deserts, the liabilities to punishment—“ of us all.” And the consequence was, “ exaction was made.” *He*, not *we*, became answerable ; and “ it pleased the Lord to bruise *him*,” and “ he was wounded ‘for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities.’” The same truth is stated when it is said, “ God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law ;” and when it is said, “ God made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us,”—*sin* there meaning a guilty person, not in the sense of a culpable person, but a person by divine appointment liable to evils manifesting the divine displeasure against sin, just as *righteousness* in the antithetical clause means a righteous person—a person standing clear of all claims for punishment at the hand of the divine law, and enjoying the acceptance of the Supreme Lawgiver. It is still the same idea when it is said, “ Christ became a curse”—that is, accursed, doomed to endure evils which the law denounces against transgressors—“ for us,” in our room,

who were “a curse,”—accursed, doomed to punishment. Laying our sins on our Lord, is the same thing as what is ordinarily expressed by imputing our sins to him.¹

Now, if we distinctly apprehend what is meant by laying our sins on Jesus Christ, we can have no difficulty in understanding what is meant by his bearing or carrying these sins. It means that as he, by divine appointment, stood in our room, he incurred our liabilities, he was exposed to and actually endured evils which we had deserved, and which were the expression of the divine displeasure against our evil deserts; and that all the multiplied and multifarious evils that he was exposed to were the consequence of his, by divine appointment, occupying this place, and being charged with these liabilities.

This fearful load of responsibility and of suffering our Lord “bare to the cross.” The cross was the term of his humbled life and of his vicarious endurance. The words before us are substantially equivalent to, “he became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”² He continued obedient, till he had exhausted all the demands of the law on him, as the victim of human transgression, in offering up to God his completed sacrifice. He “carried our sins” during the whole of his humbled state; and still laden with them, he submitted to be nailed to the cross, in its shame and agonies and unknown conflicts, consummating the great work of expiation; and in his dead body hanging on it, intimating, according to the statute of the Mosaic law, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree,”

¹ Isa. liii. 4-7; 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13. It is an acute remark of CAMERO: “Si quis dicat ‘Christum pro nobis factum esse peccatum et maledictum’ idem certo dicitur formaliter, sed significandi modus et considerandi diversus est; nam cum Christus dicitur factus esse pro nobis *peccatum*, notatur relatio et *σχίσσις* poenæ ad culpam, cum vero dicitur *maledictum*, notatur poena simpliciter.”—*Opera*, p. 518.

² Phil. ii. 8. *Μέχρι θανάτου, θανάτου δὲ σταυροῦ.*

that he had been liable to the vengeance of public justice, and that he had now fully paid the debt with which he had been charged, "restored that which he had not taken away."

He carried our "liabilities to the tree:" they were there crucified with him; they expired with him; they were buried with him. He rose again, but they did not: they are buried for ever in his grave. "It is finished," said the Saviour; and the Supreme Ruler nailed the bond, which had been fully paid, to the cross. "The handwriting which had been against us" was blotted out for ever. He thus finished the work which the Father gave him to do. He completely did his will, in "the offering of his body once for all." He "finished transgression, made an end of sin," and "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."¹ So much for the import of the expression, Christ has borne our sins to the cross.

Let us now, in a sentence or two, unfold the import of the somewhat peculiar phraseology, "He, *his own self*, bare our sins *in his own body* to the tree." There is here, I apprehend, a tacit contrast between our Lord and the Levitical priesthood. Aaron and his sons are said to "bear the iniquity of the congregation," "to make atonement for them before the Lord;"² but this they did, not by presenting themselves as victims, but by presenting, as the representatives of the people, the sacrifices on which the sins of the congregation had been laid: they did not lay themselves, but these sacrifices, on the altar. But Jesus "Christ being come, a High Priest of good things to come, not by the blood of bulls or of goats, but by his own blood, obtained eternal redemption for us:" "by himself he purged our sins." He carried them in his own person to the altar of justice, and by his own sufferings and death made expiation for

¹ John xix. 30; Col. ii. 14; Dan. ix. 24; Heb. x. 9, 10, ix. 26.

² Lev. x. 17.

them. "He offered *himself*, without spot, to God."¹ It was this which gave efficacy to his sacrifice. It was because it was "He himself," the Only-Begotten of God, "in his own body,"—in a human nature infinitely dignified by connection with the divine, prepared for him for this very purpose, to suffer and die in our room,—that he was able to carry our sins even to the cross; and by bearing them there, to bear them away completely and for ever. The meaning of the whole passage may be summed up in these words: Jesus Christ, being the Son of God, has by his vicarious sufferings and death fully expiated the sins of men.

Let us now turn our mind a little to the account here given us, of the DESIGN of our Lord's expiatory sufferings. "Christ bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness." It has been usual to consider these words as meaning, that Christ expiated our sins, that we, through the influence of his Spirit (a channel for the communication of which is opened up by the atonement), "having died to sin,"—that is, having been delivered from the love of sin, having had our sinful propensities mortified,—may live a holy life, such a life as is consistent with righteousness, such a life as the righteous law of God demands. The passage has been considered as exactly parallel with the declaration, that "Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."² A closer examination of the passage will persuade us that the apostle's meaning is somewhat different from this.

There can be no reasonable doubt, that the "sins" to which Christians are represented as dead through the expiatory sufferings of Christ, are the very same "sins" which in these expiatory sufferings He bare, and bare away. Now

¹ Heb. ix. 11, 12, 14.

² Tit. ii. 14.

we have seen, those "sins" are liabilities to punishment. The direct reference, then, is not to the depraving power, but to the condemning power, of sin, which is the source, the foundation, of its depraving power. To be "dead to sins," is to be delivered from the condemning power of sin; or, in other words, from the condemning sentence of the law, under which if a man lies, he cannot be holy; and from which if a man is delivered, his holiness is absolutely secured. "To live unto righteousness," is plainly just the positive view of that of which "to be dead to sins" is the negative view. 'Righteousness,' when opposed to 'sin,' in the sense of guilt or liability to punishment, as it very often is in the writings of the Apostle Paul, is descriptive of a state of justification. A state of guilt is a state of condemnation by God; a state of righteousness is a state of acceptance with God. To live unto righteousness, is in this case to live under the influence of a justified state, a state of acceptance with God; and the apostle's statement is: Christ Jesus, by his sufferings unto death, completely answered the demands of the law on us, by bearing and bearing away our sins, that we, believing in him, and thereby being united to him, might be as completely freed from our liabilities to punishment, as if we in our own person, not he himself in his own body, had undergone them; and that we might as really be brought into a state of righteousness, justification, acceptance with God, as if we, not he, in his obedience to death, had "magnified the law, and made it honourable;" and that thus delivered from the demoralizing influence of a state of guilt and condemnation, and subjected to the sanctifying influence of a state of justification and acceptance, we might "serve God, not in the oldness of the letter, but in the newness of the spirit;" "serving him without fear;" "walking at liberty, keeping his commandments."

The sentiment of the apostle is the same as that which his "beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him," states and illustrates more fully in the first part of the sixth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where he shows us, that Christians are by faith united to Christ, as dying, dead, raised again; and that the moral transformation of their character is the natural and necessary result of their being, as it were, united to Christ in his dying, and in his rising, and in his new life.¹

The ultimate design of the atonement, in reference to man, is to form him to a holy character; but its direct design, with a reference to this, is to bring him out of a state of guilt and condemnation, into a state of pardon and acceptance. Had not Christ died, men could not have been pardoned; and man remaining unpardoned, must have remained unsanctified. Since Christ has died, the man who by faith is interested in the expiatory efficacy of his sufferings and death is restored to the divine favour; and if restored to the divine favour, must, in the enjoyment of the influence of the Holy Spirit, the communication of which is the great proof of the divine favour, be conformed to the divine image. The tendency of the expiatory sufferings of Christ to gain their design must be obvious to every one, who reflects that they removed otherwise insurmountable obstacles in the way of man's holiness; that they opened up a way for the communication of that influence which is at once necessary and sufficient to make men holy; and that, as a display of the divine character, and the subject of a plain, well-accredited revelation, they furnish the fit instrumentality for the Holy Spirit to employ in making men holy. These are but hints on a subject which would require a volume to do justice to; but if followed out, they will be found to give

¹ Rom. vi. 1-14.

important lights in the investigation of the principles of Christian doctrine, and in the guidance of the exercises of Christian experience.

Let us now attend to the account here given of the **EFFECTS** of the expiatory sufferings of our Lord. "By his stripes ye are healed;" and though "ye were as sheep going astray, ye are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." The effects of the atonement on those who by faith are interested in its saving efficacy, are described by two instructive figures: the healing of diseased persons, and the reclaiming of lost sheep; both of them borrowed from the fifty-third chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, to which also the apostle refers when speaking of our Lord bearing our sins.

"By his stripes ye are healed."¹ Sin is often represented in Scripture as a disease. It makes men miserable in themselves, useless, sometimes loathsome, often dangerous to others; and its natural and certain termination, if allowed to run its course, is death, the second death, eternal death. Various, endlessly various methods, have been invented for curing this disease. The best of them are mere palliatives. The only effectual cure is that here mentioned: "the stripes" of the righteous Servant of God. This is a cure which it never could have entered into the mind of man to conceive; and even when made known, it seems "foolishness" to the wisdom of this world: The disease of one man healed by the stripes of another! the death of Jesus on a cross, the means of making men holy and happy! Yet so it is: "The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God stronger than men."²

¹ The coincidence in language of Aristotle's statement is remarkable, *κολάσεις ἰατρικαὶ τίνες εἰσιν*; but it is only in language. The statement is one which it never entered into the heart of man to conceive.

² 1 Cor. i. 25.

Man's disease is a deep-rooted one. It arises out of the circumstances in which he is placed. It has affected the inmost springs of life, and it discovers itself by an endless variety of external symptoms. The "stripes" of the Great Physician are a remedy which answers all these peculiarities. The expiatory sufferings of Christ, when the sinner believes, change his state. They take him out of the pestilential region of the divine curse, and translate him into the health-breathing region of divine favour. In the divine influences, for which they open the way, is given a powerful principle of health, which penetrates into the very first springs of thought, and feeling, and action; and in the views which these sufferings give us of the holy benignant character of God, the malignity of sin, the vanity of the world, the importance of eternity, there are furnished, as it were, remedies fitted to meet and remove all the various external symptoms of this worst of diseases.

This was not a matter of speculation, but of experience, with those to whom Peter was writing. "By his stripes ye are healed." You were once depraved and miserable; you are now comparatively holy and happy: and you know how the change was effected. It was by the expiatory sufferings of Jesus Christ: His stripes have healed you.

The same truth is brought before the mind under another figure, in the words that follow: "Ye were as sheep going astray; but ye are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." The natural state of mankind is like that of strayed sheep. It is a state of error, of want, of perplexity, of dissatisfaction, of danger. It is a state that gives no promise of improvement. The strayed sheep, if left to itself, will wander further and further from the fold, till it perish of hunger, fall over the precipice, or be devoured by the wild beast. Such is the state of all men by nature; but all true Christians have, like those to whom the apostle

was writing, "returned to the Shepherd and Bishop,"¹ that is, overseer, "of their souls." They have been reclaimed from their wanderings, and have found peace and security—the green pasture of heavenly truth, the still waters of heavenly consolation—under the care of Him who is the good Shepherd, the kind, faithful Overseer of souls.

And how were they brought back? It was by the expiatory sufferings of their Saviour. "The good Shepherd laid down his life for the sheep."² Without this, they could not have been reclaimed. It is the voice of his blood, the blood "that speaketh better things than that of Abel,"³ that penetrates their hearts and leads them to return. It is his love and his Father's, manifested in these sufferings, when apprehended and believed, that bring them near him, and keep them near him. Every Christian knows this.

It is an excellent use which one of the greatest of the fathers⁴ would have us to make of this statement, "Ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned to the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls:" "Let us not despair of those who yet wander, but rather earnestly pray for them. We once wandered as well as they; the grace which brought us back can bring them back. The number of the saints is to be increased from among the unholy. Those who to-day are goats, may be sheep to-morrow; and the tares of to-day may to-morrow be good grain. With God, through Christ, nothing is impossible."

Having thus very cursorily considered the apostle's statement respecting the nature, design, and effects of our Lord's

¹ The use of the word Bishop, appropriated, as it now is in the English language, to a particular ecclesiastical officer of whom the New Testament knows nothing—the Diocesan Hierarch of the Papal and Anglican churches—is here obviously improper; and were not our ears familiar to it, would be even ludicrous.

² John x. 11.

³ Heb. xii. 24.

⁴ Augustine.

sufferings, viewed as expiatory, let us now still more cursorily show the force of this statement, considered as a motive to those duties which in this paragraph he is enjoining. Did Jesus Christ, God's Son, bear our sins? Was he treated, both by God and man, as if he had sinned? Did he bear our sins in his body to the cross, patiently enduring all that was necessary to their expiation? Is it not, then, reasonable and right that we should devote ourselves to him who devoted himself *for* us? Should we not patiently do and suffer whatever he calls us to do and suffer? If he, to expiate our sins, voluntarily took upon himself "the form of a servant," and in that form submitted to such toil and suffering, should not his people who, in the course of providence, are placed in the situation of servants, from a regard to Him, cheerfully do the duties and submit to the hardships to which they may be exposed? Did he expiate our sins, "that we, being dead to sins, might live unto righteousness?" that we might be freed from the irritating, demoralizing influence of a state of condemnation, and be subject to the tranquillizing, sanctifying influences of a state of pardon and acceptance with God? Should not we, then, who profess to believe in him, and through that faith to be interested in these saving effects of his atoning sacrifice, show, by our cheerfully doing and suffering all the will of God, that in our case the expiatory sufferings of Christ have indeed served their purpose,—that we are "dead to sins, that we are alive to righteousness?" Have the great ends of the atonement been in some degree answered in our experience? Have we obtained some measure of spiritual health and welfare by virtue of the stripes which he received from God and men for our sakes? Surely, then, we should not take in ill part the shame and suffering we may be exposed to, especially that which we meet with on his account, for bearing his name, sustaining his cause.

It is well said by an old Scotch divine: "None can with patience and cheerfulness suffer wrongs for Christ, but they who do by faith apply the virtue of his sufferings for them to their own souls, for the pardoning and subduing of sin, quickening of their hearts in holiness, and healing of their spiritual distempers: which effects of his death are so sweet to them that partake of them, that they cannot but cheerfully endure the worst that men can do against them, rather than do the least thing that may be offensive to him."¹

Have we, in consequence of the good Shepherd laying down his life for us, been reclaimed from our wanderings, joined to his flock, and blessed with his pastoral care? Should we not, then, entirely resign ourselves to his guidance, and follow him fearlessly and readily through paths, however rugged and thorny, while he is conducting us to his heavenly fold? Should we not have perfect confidence in his love and power, manifested in dying for us, and in reclaiming us from our wanderings, and therefore readily do whatever he commands, because he commands it,—cheerfully submit to whatever he appoints, because he appoints it?

Thus have I endeavoured to bring out the meaning and force of the apostle's statement respecting the nature, design, and effects of the sufferings of Christ, viewed as expiatory, as a motive to Christian duty generally, and especially to the patient endurance of such undeserved suffering as Christians may be exposed to. The practical effect of those powerful motives on our minds and conduct will be proportioned to the degree in which we understand and believe the great fundamental principles of the doctrine of Christian faith on which they are founded; and neglect of or carelessness in duty, and impatience under affliction, are to be traced to want or weakness of faith in these principles.

¹ Nisbet.

Let us, then, not cease to pray, each for himself, and all of us for each other, and “desire, that we may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God: strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son; in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”¹

¹ Col. i. 11-14.

DISCOURSE XIV.

THE CONJUGAL DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS ILLUSTRATED AND ENFORCED.

“Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered.”—1 PET. iii. 1-7.

DIVINE revelation has often been compared to the sun; and it would be easy to trace out many striking, pleasing, instructive analogies between these two glorious works of God. To one of these analogies, suggested by that portion of Scripture which now lies before us, I would for a moment solicit your attention. The sun, from his high throne in the heavens, diffuses light and heat and genial influence over all the earth, smiling benignant on the lofty mountain and the humble vale, the populous city and the obscure village, the fertile field and the wilderness, the noble's mansion with its richly cultivated demesne, and the peasant's cottage with its surrounding barren waste. “His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of

it, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.”¹ The sun is a common good. It is for the world, for all the world.

It is thus also with divine truth enshrined in the Bible. It pours forth direction, and motive, and warning, and comfort suited to all men; to men of all countries, all ages, all conditions; to the young, to the middle-aged, and to the old; to the rich and to the poor, and to those to whom neither poverty nor riches have been given; to the prosperous and to the afflicted; to the happy and to the miserable; to man in the lowest and in the highest station in society and state of civilisation; to the savage and to the sage; to the monarch and to the slave. It is the moral sun of the world of humanity, shedding pure light, holy influence over the whole of its diversified surface. No class of men is overlooked; every individual, in whatever circumstances he may be placed, may find suitable instruction here.

In the verses immediately preceding our text, we see the light of inspired truth shining most benignantly on the humble dwelling of the Christian slave, and guiding and sustaining and cheering him amid his unmerited sufferings and ill-rewarded toils; and in the text itself, the sun of righteousness sheds beams full of healing on the very sources of society, in those directions, by complying with which, families might be made the abodes of a tranquil enjoyment and holy happiness, which would lead the mind backward to Eden and forward to heaven.

The words that lie before us are a further illustration of the general injunction given to Christians, to “have their conversation honest among the Gentiles;” that is, so to conduct themselves, as that even their heathen neighbours should be constrained to approve and respect them. The

¹ Ps. xix. 6.

manner in which this injunction was to be obeyed, was by a careful performance of relative duties, especially such as they owed to their heathen connections. Of the excellence of such a course of conduct they were qualified judges, but they were not of the principles of "our most holy faith," nor of duties of a more strictly religious and Christian character. All Christians, therefore, were to yield a cheerful, loyal subjection to civil authority, as lodged both in its supreme and subordinate administrators; to cherish and display a becoming respect for all who, on whatever ground, had a claim on their respect; to cultivate and manifest that peculiar regard to the Christian society, which, in Christians, even heathens could not help perceiving to be becoming and proper; and to show a reverence for the supreme civil power, based on, and limited only by, the reverence due to Him who is "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Such Christians as stood in the relation of servants, especially to heathen masters, were carefully to discharge the duties and submit to the hardships connected with the situation in which they were placed. The natural tendency of such conduct, such "good works," habitually and perseveringly maintained, was to overcome the prejudices of their heathen neighbours, to convince them that they had misapprehended the true character both of their religion and of themselves; and to constrain those "who spoke against them as evil-doers, to glorify God in the day of visitation."

Another way in which the same desirable object was to be sought, was by those who stood in the relation of husbands and wives, conscientiously discharging the duties which grew out of their union. And when we reflect on the manner in which the duties of the conjugal relation were neglected and violated among heathens; how much there was of the harshness of the tyrant in the character of the

heathen husband, and of the baseness of the slave in the character of the heathen wife ; how much pollution and cruelty prevailed in what should be the sanctuary of purity and love, —we cannot help seeing, that few things were more calculated to strike, and to strike favourably, heathen observers, than the exemplification of the genius and power of Christianity, in softening the character of the husband, and elevating at once the condition and character of the wife ; and in thus introducing an order, and purity, and endearment, and enjoyment into the domestic circle, not only beyond what heathen philosophy had accomplished, but beyond what it had ever dreamed of.

Such is the connection, we apprehend, in which the interesting passage I have read is introduced ; and it contains a brief statement and a powerful enforcement of the conjugal duties : first of the duties of the wife, and then of the duties of the husband.

The whole of the conjugal duties, like indeed all duties, may be and are “summed up in one word, love.” “Husbands,” says the Apostle Paul, “love your wives ;” and the same apostle commands Titus to take care “that the aged women teach the young women to love their husbands.”¹ But the appropriate form of love in any particular case, when embodied in action, depends on the relation in which the party who loves stands to the party beloved. Parents are to “love their children,” and to show that they do so by “bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Children are to “love their parents,” and to show that they do so by “being obedient to them in the Lord.” Masters are to love their servants, and to show this by being kind and considerate in their requisitions and arrangements ; and servants are to love their masters, and to show that they do so by being obe-

¹ Eph. v. 25 ; Tit. ii. 4.

dient and submissive, diligent and faithful.¹ In the like manner, husbands and wives are to “love one another with a pure heart fervently;” and they are to manifest that love by a careful performance of the duties which rise out of, and are suited to, the relation in which they respectively stand to each other. What these are, we are told by the apostle in the passage before us. The duties of the wives are—subjection, “chaste conversation coupled with fear,” and an adorning of themselves, which is described, first negatively, and then positively; and the motives urging to the performance of these duties are two: first, that thus they might probably be the means of converting their heathen husbands; and secondly, that thus they would follow the example of holy women in former ages. The duties of the husbands are—dwelling with their wives according to knowledge, and giving honour to them; and the motives urging to the performance of these duties are three: first, that the wife is “the weaker vessel;” secondly, that their wives, as Christians, are equally with themselves “heirs of the grace of life;” and thirdly, that an opposite mode of conduct would hinder their prayers. Let us attend, then, in their order, to these statements and enforcements of the conjugal duties.

PART I.

I. THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN WIVES.

And, first, of the duties of wives. Their duty is thus stated and enforced in the first six verses: “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; when they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorning,

¹ Eph. vi. 4, 1, 9, 5.

let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection to their own husbands; even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement."

§ 1. *Subjection.*

The first duty of Christian wives mentioned by the apostle is SUBJECTION. "Be in subjection to your own husbands." The Apostle Paul enjoins the same duty in similar terms: "Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord: wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as is fit in the Lord;" and he commands Titus, in "speaking the things that become sound doctrine," to exhort "that the aged women teach the young women to be obedient to their own husbands."¹ I believe that, in the conjugal relation, matters are best managed when there is little display or assertion of superiority or rule on the part of the husband, but where the spouses "submit themselves one to another, in the fear of God."² There can, however, be no doubt that God, both as the God of nature and the God of revelation, has distinctly indicated that the rule of the domestic society is vested in the husband. Hear the declarations of Scripture: "Adam was first formed, and then Eve. The man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man. The man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man. The Lord said, It is not good for man to be alone; I will make

¹ Eph. v. 22; Col. iii. 18; Tit. ii. 5.

² Eph. v. 21.

him a help meet for him. The man is the image and glory of God, but the woman is the glory of the man." Even in a state of innocence the husband had rule; and after the introduction of sin, of which the apostle gives this account, "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, was in the transgression," the divine will was thus declared: "And to the woman he said, Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."¹

This appointment is in entire concurrence with sound reason and true expediency. "In all communities, if there is to be order and peace, there must be rule. There can be no happiness without peace, no peace without order, no order without subordination, no subordination without subjection. Perpetual strife would arise from equality or contested superiority."² To secure the advantages of society in all its forms, authority must be established and submission enjoined. The only question in such a case is, Where should the authority be lodged? And in the case of the domestic society it would seem that the question admits only of one answer.

The subjection of the wife is extensive, but by no means unlimited. It is subjection "in the Lord;" such a subjection as becomes a Christian woman who feels her own responsibilities to the one Master in heaven. "His authority is primitive, and binds fast;" as Leighton says, "All other have their patents and privileges from him. He therefore is supremely and absolutely to be obeyed by all." Besides, "it is not the submission of slaves to their master, or of subjects to their sovereign, or of children to their father. It is a subjection that has more of equality in it, accords with the idea of a helper, a companion and a friend; springs originally from choice, and is acquiesced in for the

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 13; 1 Cor. xi. 7-9; Gen. ii. 18; 1 Tim. ii. 14; Gen. iii. 16.

² Jay.

sake of propriety and advantage.”¹ It has been very justly remarked, “Whatever bitterness there is in this subjection arises from the corruption of nature in both parties : in the wife, of a perverse desire rather to command, or at least a repining disinclination to obey ; and this increased by the disorder and imprudence and harshness of the husband in the use of his authority. But in a Christian woman, the conscience of divine authority will carry it, and weigh down all difficulties ; for the wife considers her station. She is set in it ; it is the rank the Lord’s hand has placed her in, and therefore she will not break it. Out of respect and love to him, she can digest much frowardness of a husband, and make her patient subjection an offering to God. ‘Lord, I offer this to thee. For thy sake I humbly bear it.’”²

It is a happy thing when the personal excellence of a husband makes submission a compliance with inclination ; but a Christian woman, even when her husband is not so wise or reasonable in his requisitions and arrangements as she could wish, yet, because by God’s providence he is her own husband, and God’s command is to be subject to her own husband, she is subject to the marital authority, not only “for wrath, but for conscience sake.” Such conduct is acceptable to God, and generally draws down tokens of his approbation. By following this course, many a woman has spent a life of respectability and usefulness, who by acting otherwise would neither have been respectable nor useful ; and many a family has been a scene of order and peace, where otherwise there would have been nothing but confusion and every evil work. Besides, it is the submissive wife who generally gets most of her own will.³

¹ Jay.

² Leighton.

³ *Casta ad virum matrona parendo imperat.*—PUBLIUS SYRUS.

§ 2. "*Chaste conversation coupled with fear.*"

The second duty of Christian wives mentioned by the apostle is "chaste conversation coupled with fear." Conversation here, and uniformly in the Scriptures, does not signify mutual talk, colloquial intercourse, familiar discourse, but habitual conduct, manner of life. Chaste conversation means much more than abstinence from gross vice, direct violation of the seventh commandment, actual infraction of the marriage covenant. Indeed, such things were not even to be named among Christians. The reference is rather to an avoidance of everything that has even the appearance of an approximation to the indulgence or display of sentiments and feelings inconsistent with that purity of mind, that chastity of heart, which the Christian law requires. There is, as has been justly observed, an audacity of countenance, a boldness of look, a levity of discourse, a freedom of manners, a forwardness of behaviour, a challenging, obtrusive, advancing air, very unbecoming the sacred decorum which should mark the character of Christian females. Their conduct must be such as to awe the licentious, and keep them at a distance; and their language must be free from all foolish talking and jesting, which is not convenient, does not suit with their character and profession as holy women. "Diffidence, the blushings of reserve, the tremulous retiring of modesty; the sensation that comes from the union of innocence and danger; the prudence which keeps far from the limits of permission; the instinctive vigilance which discerns danger afar off; the caution which never allows the enemy to approach near enough, even to reconnoitre,"¹—all this, which virtuous women understand far better than any man can describe it to them, is included in chaste conversation.

¹ Jay.

This "chaste conversation" is to be "coupled with fear." Some suppose that "fear" here is respect to their husbands; others, that it is that timidity which I have just noticed. I rather think that here, as at the 18th verse of the preceding chapter, "fear" is the fear of God, reverence for the divine authority, fear of the divine displeasure. Their chastity, like all their virtues, was to have a religious character, being based on faith, and sustained and nourished by those principles which naturally spring from faith of the truth respecting the divine character. Genuine religion is the grand security of all the virtues; and it was of importance that these Christian wives of heathen husbands should make it plain that their chaste behaviour, which their husbands could not but appreciate, was the result of that religion which they neglected or opposed.

§ 3. *The adorning themselves with inward ornaments.*

The third duty enjoined on Christian wives refers to the manner in which they were to adorn themselves: "Whose adorning, let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;¹ but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." The love of ornament belongs to the species; but it is a principle peculiarly strong in the female part of it. That a maid should "forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire," is spoken of by the inspired writer as a very unlikely thing.² There is nothing wrong in this principle in itself. It serves

¹ *Ἐνδύσεις ἱματίων.* Lyra gives an odd reason for the use of the plural here: "Solent enim feminæ tot induere vestes, TOTQUE tunicis, peplis, palliis, iisque sericis, byssinis, preciosis et sumptuosis se ornare, ut unius ornatus multis feminis sufficere possit."

² Jer. ii. 32.

important purposes. The want of it is felt as a serious drawback. A sloven is disagreeable, a slattern intolerable. Christianity makes no war with anything in any of man's natural principles but the abuse of them. Its object is not to extirpate them, but to prune them, to train them, to make them yield good fruit. Thus it is with the love of ornament, which is natural to the female mind. The apostle gives directions as to the guidance and regulation of this principle. These are both negative and positive. Let us look at them in succession.

The negative direction is, "Let not the adorning" of Christian wives—and the remark is applicable to Christian women generally—"Let not their adorning" be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold,¹ and of putting on of apparel. Some have considered these words, and the corresponding words in the First Epistle to Timothy—"In like manner that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array,"²—as an absolute prohibition of Christian women artificially to dress their hair, to wear ornaments composed of gold, silver, and precious stones, or to clothe themselves in any garment but what is plain and unadorned. I think Christian women may very easily fall into more dangerous misinterpretations of the Scripture than this; yet I have no doubt it is a misinterpretation. The words before us do not contain a positive prohibition of all ornamental dress; but they are a statement that these ornaments were not for a moment to be compared to ornaments of a higher kind. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," means, 'I prefer mercy to sacrifice.' And the passage before us means, 'I

¹ Drusus supposes the reference to be to golden necklaces, and would supply τοῦ σπαχήλου.

² 1 Tim. ii. 9.

pay more, far more, attention to the adorning of your minds and hearts with Christian graces and virtues, than of your bodies with jewels and splendid apparel.'

At the same time, I have no doubt that these words were intended to suggest some very important hints as to the principles on which Christian women should regulate their dress. Christian women should carefully avoid everything which has the appearance of immodesty or levity in dress. Abandoned women were, in the apostle's time, distinguished by their very great attention to external ornament. Christian women, on the contrary, must adorn themselves in modest apparel. It is most unbecoming that a woman professing godliness should wear the attire of a mere woman of the world, much more the attire of a harlot. No fashion can sanction such a mode of dress.

Christian women should also avoid undue expense in their mode of dress. It cometh of evil when Christian females aspire to, and indulge in, a richness of apparel and ornament, which is unsuitable to their rank in life, and which curtails their means of Christian beneficence, especially in clothing the poor. "Such excessive costliness," says the good Archbishop, "both argues and feeds the pride of the heart, and defrauds, if not others of their dues, yet the poor of their charity, which in God's sight is a due debt too; and far more comfort shalt thou have on thy death-bed to remember that at such a time, instead of putting lace on my own clothes, I helped a naked back to clothing; I abated somewhat of my former superfluities to supply the poor with necessities: far sweeter will this be than to remember that I could needlessly cast out many pounds to serve my pride, while I grudged a penny to relieve the poor."

There is still another hint which this negative injunction is intended and fitted to give—that dress should not occupy

an undue share of the attention and time of Christian wives. The apostle intimates that it is a very subordinate thing. No Christian woman will suffer the adorning of her body to be either her business or her delight. She will not render herself responsible at the bar of God for the work of hours, days, weeks, months, in a long life of years, which might, which ought to, have been otherwise and more worthily employed, in a way more becoming rational, responsible, immortal beings. Listen to the good Archbishop again: "To have the mind taken and pleased with such things is so foolish and childish a thing, that if most might not find it in themselves, they would wonder at many others of years and common wit, not twice children, but always; and yet truly it is a disease that few escape. It is strange upon what poor things men and women will be vain and think themselves somebody; not only upon some comeliness in their form or features, which, though poor enough, is yet a part of themselves, but of things merely without them—that they are well apparelled, either richly or well in fashion. Light, empty minds are as bladders, blown up with anything; and they that perceive not this in themselves are most deluded; but such as have found it out, and abhor their own follies, are still hunting and following them to beat them out of their hearts, and to shame themselves out of such fopperies. The soul fallen from God hath lost its true worth and beauty, and therefore it basely descends to these mean things, to serve and dress the body, and to take share with it of its unworthy borrowed ornaments, while it hath lost and forgotten God, and seeks not after him, knows not that he alone is the beauty and ornament of the soul, and his Spirit and his graces its rich attire."

This naturally leads to the apostle's positive injunction regarding ornaments. It is in these words: "But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not cor-

ruptible; even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." The general meaning here is plain enough. There is some difficulty, however, in fixing the construction of the passage, which is obviously to some extent elliptical. The precise meaning, of course, varies according as the words are construed. Some would construe them thus: "Let your adorning not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart,"—the new creature, 'the inner man,' the holy character which springs out of the faith of the truth,—“in that which is incorruptible,” which is not, like gold and jewels, put on thy corruptible body, but which inheres in the incorruptible mind,—“the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which in the sight of God is of great price.” Others would construe them thus: “Let the hidden man of the heart, in contrast to the outward man of the body, be adorned with the incorruptible ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, in contrast with the corruptible ornaments of gold and apparel,—an ornament which in the sight of God is of great price, in contrast with the estimation in which men hold external ornaments.” The latter construction seems to me to bring out most exactly the apostle's thought, which let us now endeavour shortly to illustrate.

“The inner man of the heart” is just the heart, which is the inner man. The heart, in its ordinary figurative sense, is the mind of man considered both as the seat of intellect and of affection, the soul. Christian women—indeed all Christians, whether men or women—should be most solicitous about the welfare and the ornament, not of the outer man, the body, but of this inner man, the soul. And the ornaments with which it is to be adorned must be suitable to its nature; they must be incorruptible. The soul is indestructible and immortal; and so should its orna-

ments be. The appropriate ornaments of the soul are truth and holiness, knowledge, faith, hope, love, joy, humility, wisdom, prudence, fortitude, gentleness, and all the other gifts and graces of the Spirit; these are the jewels with which the inner man should be adorned. The outward man is corruptible. Dust it is, and unto the dust must it return. However stately and strong, and graceful and beautiful, it must ere long be a mass of putrefaction, a ghastly skeleton, a heap of bones, a heap of dust, indistinguishable from the dust by which it is surrounded. And all its ornaments are, like itself, destructible. Moth and worm destroy the richest garments; silver and gold are perishable things. Gold, though tried with the fire, perishes. But neither time nor eternity can destroy either the soul or its appropriate ornaments. The soul is immortal; these ornaments are not put on it; they are essential qualities of itself, and while it endures they must endure.

There is particular notice taken of one of these imperishable ornaments, of which it was the duty of the Christian wives to see that they were possessed—the “ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.” Nothing is more ornamental to a Christian wife than a meek and quiet spirit. No deformity is more unsightly than its reverse—a discontented, fretful, peevish, domineering spirit. Hateful everywhere, it is nowhere more hateful than in woman; in no woman so hateful as in a wife. Hear the declaration of the inspired Israelitish sage: “A continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman, are alike. It is better to dwell in the corner of a housetop alone, than with a brawling woman in a wide house. It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and angry woman. Whoso hideth her hideth the wind, and the ointment of the right hand, which bewrayeth itself.”¹ How beautiful, on the other hand, is

¹ Prov. xxvii. 15, xxv. 24, xxi. 19.

the Christian woman who, amid the endlessly perplexing details of domestic management, maintains an unruffled temper, and in Christian patience possesses her soul ! It is a lovely picture which has been drawn of a Christian wife, as "one who can feel neglects and unkindnesses, and yet retain her composure ; who can calmly remonstrate and meekly reprove ; who can yield and accommodate ; who is not 'easily provoked,' and is 'easily entreated ;' who would endure rather than complain, and would rather suffer in secret than disturb others with her grief."¹

This ornament, and the whole class it belongs to, is "in the sight of God of great price." One of the reasons why many females are so fond of fine clothes and rich ornaments is, that these are admired by others. But by whom are they admired ? By men ; and most admired by the least wise and worthy of the species, men whose opinion is little worth. But this ornament of the hidden man of the heart is "in the sight of God of great price." He who alone has wisdom admires it. Yes, "he looks" to, he dwells with, the meek, the humble, the lowly heart. And his approbation is of more value than that of all the other beings in the universe. "Not she who commendeth herself—not she whom men commend—is approved, but she whom God commendeth." The meek and quiet spirit, like faith, will "be found to glory and honour and praise at the coming of our Lord Jesus."² In that day, the man who, for his genius, learning, or successful ambition, excited the wonder of nations, and whose praises were celebrated from age to age, and through widely distant countries, but who never obtained, because he never sought, the honour that cometh down from above, shall be filled with shame, covered with contempt ; while the woman of a meek and quiet spirit, who,

¹ Jay. "A courage to endure and to obey."—TENNYSON.

² Isa. lxvi. 2 ; 2 Cor. x. 18.

in the retirement of very lowly domestic life, performed conscientiously the laborious duties and sustained patiently the varied trials of her humble sphere, from regard to the authority of God, and under the constraining influence of the love of his Son, shall be seen to be "glorious within," one whom the King of kings delights to honour, and to whom he will say, in the presence of assembled men and angels, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

"Men think it poor and mean to be meek. Nothing is more exposed to contempt than the spirit of meekness. It is mere folly with men; but that is no matter: this overweighs all their disesteem: 'It is with God of great price.' And things are indeed as he values them, and no otherwise. Though it be not the country's fashion, yet it is the fashion at court, yea, it is the king's own fashion: 'Learn of me, says he, for I am meek and lowly in heart.' And when he girds on his sword, and rides forth prosperously, it is 'for meekness, and truth, and righteousness.' Some that are court-bred will send for the prevailing fashions there, though they live not at court; and though the peasants think them strange dresses, yet they regard not that, but use them as finest and best. Care not what the world say; you are not to stay long with them. Desire to have both your fashions and your stuffs from heaven. The robe of humility, the garment of meekness, will be sent you. Wear them, for his sake who sends them you. He will be pleased to see you in them; and is this not enough? It is never right in anything with us till we attain to this; to tread on the opinion of men, and eye nothing but God's approbation."¹

It may perhaps be worth while noticing, before closing this part of the discourse, that the greatest of all the

¹ Leighton.

Grecian philosophers, Plato, has a passage which strikingly resembles that which we have been illustrating: "Behaviour, and not gold, is the ornament of a woman. To courtezans, these things, jewels and ornaments, are advantageous to their catching more admirers; but for a woman who wishes to enjoy the favour of one man, good behaviour is the proper ornament, and not dresses. And you should have the blush upon your countenance, which is the sign of modesty, instead of paint; and worth and sobriety, instead of gold and emeralds."¹ It is impossible not to notice the similarity; but it is as impossible not at the same time to notice the superiority. The philosopher is entirely of the earth, earthy. The apostle brings the authority of God, and the power of the unseen world, distinctly into view. While Plato leads wives to seek exclusively the honour which comes from men, Peter teaches them to seek the honour that cometh down from God, the true judge of excellence, the great fountain of honour.

II. MOTIVES ADDRESSED TO CHRISTIAN WIVES TO THE PERFORMANCE OF THEIR DUTIES.

§ 1. *The probability of converting their husbands.*

Let us proceed now to the consideration of the motives by which the discharge of these duties is recommended. The first of these motives is drawn from the probability that, by following the course enjoined, the Christian wife might be the means of converting to the faith and obedience of Christ her heathen or Jewish husband. Christian wives are to be in subjection to their husbands; they are to have a chaste conversation, mingled with fear; they are to adorn themselves, not so much outwardly, by having the body ornamented with plaiting of hair, wearing of gold, or putting

¹ Plato, *de Repub.*

on of apparel, as inwardly, by having the mind adorned with "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit;" in order that such husbands as have not been converted by the word, may be won to the faith of Christ by "the conversation," that is, the character and conduct, of their wives.

The apostle here obviously goes on the supposition, that a Christian woman may have for her husband a man who is not a Christian. Then, as now, the wife might be an heir of glory, and the husband a son of perdition. The closest natural alliance might be associated with the most complete spiritual disunion; and between persons who are so intimately connected, as to be "no longer twain, but one flesh," in reference to spiritual character, privilege, and hope, there might be a great gulf fixed. They who have civilly all things common, spiritually may have nothing common,—no common principles, no common feelings, no common hopes or fears, joys or sorrows.

This is very far from being a desirable state of things. On the part of the converted person, it must be the source of constant and most fearful anxiety; and this just in proportion to the degree of his or her piety, and of the love cherished to the unconverted partner. It is a state of things into which a very rare peculiarity of circumstances can make it even innocent for a Christian to enter. Some Christian moralists have held that there is no combination of circumstances which can do this; but that in every case, for a Christian to contract marriage with an unbeliever, is a direct violation of the law of Christ. To this opinion I was myself at one time an adherent; but on further reflection, I must say that this appears to me to be taking higher ground than the Scripture warrants. The two passages of Scripture commonly quoted in support of this sentiment, when carefully examined, will be found incapable of answering the purpose. The first of these passages,

“Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers,”¹ obviously refers to church fellowship, and not to the marriage relation, as must be obvious to every person who reads it in its connection. The second of them, where the Christian widow is said to be at liberty to marry whom she will, “only in the Lord,”² does not mean that she must marry a Christian man, or remain unmarried; but that, in using her liberty, she ought to act as a person “in the Lord,” in a manner becoming a saint: just as, when Christian children are required to obey their parents in the Lord, the meaning is, not that they obey their parents if they be Christians, but that they obey their parents as Christians are bound to do.

It is quite a conceivable case, that it may be a Christian's duty to marry, where it may be impossible for him to obtain a Christian partner; and it is to be recollected, that marriage is a secular, not a religious relation. At the same time, these cases are of very rare occurrence; and generally speaking, the Christian who does not marry a Christian, does not act like a Christian. In all ordinary circumstances, for a Christian to marry a person, with the distinct understanding that that person is not a Christian, or indeed without satisfactory evidence that he or she is a Christian, is equally criminal and unwise. The principles and the histories of Scripture are equally opposed to such connections; and I believe that there are few violations of Christian duty that are more frequently, indeed all but uniformly, and severely punished than this. The consideration which in some such cases has blinded the eyes of individuals to the impropriety and folly of such conduct,—the hope of becoming useful, in the highest sense of the word, to an object of affection, by becoming the means of conversion,—is plainly most fallacious. We must not do evil

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 14.

² 1 Cor. vii. 39.

that good may come: and it should be remembered, that if there may be conversion on the one side, there may be perversion on the other; and in the whole circumstances of the case, the latter may be the more probable of the two events. The sad result of the marriages of the antediluvian sons of God with the daughters of men, is recorded in Scripture as a beacon, to warn all succeeding generations against such unnatural and unhallowed connections.

But a Christian woman may, without fault on her part, find herself the wife of an unconverted man. It is a possible thing that she may have been deceived in her estimate of the character of him whom she has chosen for her companion through life; the mask of religion having been assumed to serve a purpose (and sometimes it has so much the appearance of reality, that it is not wonderful that mistakes, sad mistakes, are committed by the inexperienced): or, what is of much more frequent occurrence, and to which in all probability the apostle refers, both may have been in a state of unconversion when the marriage relation was formed, but a change in the wife may have taken place subsequently, she, under divine influence, having been led to embrace a vital Christianity, while her husband remains destitute of, or opposed to it, "dead in trespasses and in sins;" she becoming a subject of Jesus Christ, while he continues a rebel. What probably would have prevented, what, in ordinary circumstances, ought to have prevented marriage, does not dissolve it. The Christian wife is not warranted to withdraw from her unconverted husband on that ground. She must continue with him, and perform to him all the duties of an affectionate and respectful wife. She must be in subjection to her own husband, probably more in subjection than ever; for her conversion will probably have greatly widened her

view of conjugal duty, and deepened her sense of its obligation.

The situation referred to is a very trying one, and the apostle proposes a very powerful and encouraging motive to a discharge of its difficult duties. He holds out the hope of the Christian wife becoming the means of the salvation of her husband. He supposes a very bad case: he supposes that the husband has not "obeyed the word," that is, "the word of the truth of the gospel;" he has resisted its claims on his attention, faith, and obedience. The Christian wife, no doubt, has endeavoured to bring him within the reach of the Christian preacher's voice: it may be, he refused to come; or he came, but departed unimpressed, unbelieving,—it may be, scoffing and blaspheming. The Christian wife, if she act in character, will use more private means to bring her husband under the influence of the word, by reading the Scriptures and other good books, if she can get him to listen to them, and by wisely and affectionately, with her own living voice, endeavouring to convey to him the saving truth. But all may be in vain,—all often has been in vain, apparently worse than in vain; so that all direct attempts to effect a change have to be abandoned, as likely to do mischief rather than good, hardening prejudice, provoking resistance.

Still the Christian wife must not despair, especially she must not be weary in the well-doing of a conscientious performance of her conjugal duties; and the motive, the all-powerful, the sweetly constraining motive, so full of power over the principles of the Christian and the affections of the wife, is: And "what knowest thou, O woman, whether thou shalt save thy husband?" Even without the word, which he will not obey, he may be gained by thy chaste conversation, obviously based on and sustained by Christian piety. It has been said justly, that "a silent work

is better than idle speech.”¹ The cheerful, affectionate, constant performance of all conjugal duties, especially when it is made quite plain that this is the result of Christian principle, is fitted to make impression even on unthinking and insensible men. The difference for the better which conversion has made on the relative conduct of the wife, almost necessarily leads the husband’s mind to what has produced it, and gives birth to the thought, ‘That cannot be a bad thing which produces such good effects.’ His prejudices are gradually weakened. By and by, he, it may be voluntarily, commences to talk on a subject on which formerly he had angrily forbidden all conversation, accompanies his wife to the Christian assembly, and ultimately listens to, believes, and obeys the word which he had formerly rejected. “A life of undissembled holiness, and heavenliness, and self-denial, and meekness, and love, and mortification, is a powerful sermon, which, if you be constantly preaching before those who are near you, will hardly miss of a good effect. Works are more palpably significant than words alone.”² This is the natural tendency of a quiet, cheerful, persevering performance of conjugal duty to unconverted husbands—“not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward;” and, by the accompanying blessing of the good Spirit, this has not unfrequently been its blessed effect.

There is something very beautiful in the phraseology in which the conversion of the Jewish or heathen husband is described. He is said to be “won.” He was lost; lost to true happiness; lost, continuing in his present state, for eternity: but when he is brought to the knowledge of the truth, he is won—gained, gained to himself, gained to the Saviour,—“added,” as Leighton says, “to His treasury, who

¹ “*Ἀφῶνον γὰρ ἔργον πρὸς ἁπλάκτου λόγου.*—*ŒCUMENIUS.*

² Baxter.

thought not his own precious blood too dear to lay out for this gain."

The motive here presented to a truly Christian woman is certainly a very cogent one. Its force has been finely brought out by a great living preacher: "The salvation of a soul! the salvation of a husband's soul! O seek that you lose not him who is so dear to you, 'in the valley of the shadow of death.' See that the parting at death be not a final parting. Let your friendship survive the desolations of time, and be renewed to infinite advantage beyond the grave. To the tie that nothing but death can sever, seek to add one which defies even his power to cut asunder. Think, O wife, of the happiness which will result from the success of your endeavours. What pleasure will attend the remainder of your days, now of one heart and of one mind! How sweet will be the counsel you can now take together! How delightful to go to the house of God in company! How enlivening to add the *our* Father of the family altar to the *my* Father of the closet, which witnessed your wrestling with God, that he whom you loved might also be led to say *my* Father! And what will be your joy and crown of rejoicing in that day when, before assembled men and angels, he will say, 'Blessed be the providence which attached us in yonder world, and has still more united us in this. The woman thou gavest me to be with me led me not to the tree of knowledge of good and evil, but to the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.'" ¹ The practical effect which the pressing of this motive should have on the Christian wife is excellently expressed by one of the fathers of the Church: "Let a prudent woman first of all endeavour to persuade her husband to become partaker with her in those things which lead to blessedness; but if he prove impracticable, let her still

¹ Jay.

apply with all diligence to a virtuous life, in everything yielding obedience to her husband, and doing nothing contrary to his will, except in such things as are reckoned essential to virtue and salvation.”¹

§ 2. *The example of holy women in former ages.*

The second motive presented by the apostle to Christian wives to stimulate and encourage them in the performance of their conjugal duties is, that in doing so they would follow the example of holy women in former ages: “For after this manner, in the old time, the holy women also who trusted in God adorned themselves: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.” There is a natural tendency in the human mind to regard with veneration the characters of those distinguished for sanctity who lived in distant ages; and it is an additional recommendation to any course of conduct urged on us, that it was followed by those to whom we have been accustomed to look up as models. The good women whose names are recorded in the book of God, such as Sarah and Hannah, were with the pious Hebrews objects of affectionate admiration. They deserve to be so. Their sanctity and purity of manners, for they were “holy,” joined to their piety, for they “trusted in God,” made them objects of the love, and fit models for the imitation, of their descendants. They were in “subjection to their own husbands,” and had a “chaste conversation, coupled with fear.” They adorned less the seen man of the body than the hidden man of the heart; and their ornaments were not so much golden jewels or costly apparel, as the meek and humble spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. No one who is not thus characterized can share the honour which belongs to these

¹ Clem. Alex.

illustrious females. Every one who is thus characterized does share their honour. However inferior in her talents, however obscure in her situation, however poor in her circumstances, every such woman, every such wife, is recognised as a daughter of Sarah, a sister of Hannah, and the other holy women who "built the house of Jacob, and did worthily in the families of Israel."¹

Sarah is particularly noticed as having obeyed Abraham, and as having shown her respect for him by calling him lord. The particular instances in which Sarah obeyed Abraham are not distinctly specified by the apostle. It has been supposed that the reference may be to her obeying Abraham's voice, when he obeyed Jehovah in leaving the land of their nativity, where they had many relations and probably abundant possessions, to go forth into a land of which they knew no more than that Jehovah should afterwards tell them of it; and to her yielding up Isaac, her only son, the son of the promise, the son of her old age, to the disposal of his father, when he received the strange command to take him and offer him up for a burnt-offering. If in these two trying cases Sarah did yield a ready obedience to her husband's expressed will, she well deserves to be represented as a model to wives in succeeding ages. The reference, however, does not seem so much to particular instances as to the habit of obedience. Indeed, in one instance at least, she seems to have carried her disposition to obey her husband to an extreme; for when he instructed her to equivocate in Egypt, and represent herself as his sister, she would have done well respectfully to have replied, "I must obey God rather than my husband." Her exemplary character as a wife was manifested also in the manner in which she was accustomed to address her husband: she called him lord. Though of the same rank with her

¹ Ruth iv. 11.

husband, a member of the same family, and distinguished by peculiar honours as the mother of the son of the promise, she never thought herself above the humblest duties of her station, but habitually revered her husband.

It deserves notice as a proof how ready God is to approve, and to testify his approbation of, what is good in the conduct of his people, that the speech of which this compellation was a part, was in substance an expression of unbelief respecting the promise of God, for which at the time she was severely reprimanded; yet here, after the lapse of so many ages, she is spoken honourably of for the only good thing in that unhappy speech—a becoming expression of respectful regard for her husband. How readily does God pardon the sins of the upright in heart! And how highly does he estimate, how graciously does he accept, their poorest services! He does “not forget” them.¹

Sarah was highly honoured among the pious Jews as the wife of Abraham, the father of the faithful; and the mother of Isaac, the son of the promise. A daughter of Sarah was to the Jewish women an appellation of similar desirableness and dignity, as to a Jewish man, a son of Abraham. All truly Christian women were daughters of Sarah, as all truly Christian men were sons of Abraham: “Children according to the promise; not of the bondwoman, but of the free.”²

There is more true honour connected with this spiritual lineage than springs from deriving our birth

“From loins enthroned, or sovereigns of the earth.”³

Now this honour belongs to all Christian wives “so long as they do well.” While they discharge the duties of their station from proper motives, and in a proper manner, they will be reckoned the heirs of her faith, sharers in her

¹ Gen. xviii. 12; Heb. vi. 10.

² Gal. iii. 29, iv. 31.

³ Cowper.

honours; they will be blessed with obedient Sarah and faithful Abraham. The apostle's declaration goes on the same principle as our Lord's: "If ye were the children of Abraham, ye would do the works of Abraham."¹ "Doing the works of Sarah, ye prove yourselves to be her daughters."

The apostle adds, "And are not afraid with any amazement." There is some difficulty in fixing the precise meaning and reference of these words. I will state to you in a very few words what I consider as the most probable interpretation that has been given them. The best principles may be carried to extremes. The duties we owe to superiors are not likely to be performed with propriety and regularity, if we have not a respect for their persons and a fear of their displeasure; but this may easily become excessive. This fear of man in all its forms brings a snare. It was the duty of the Christian wives of heathen husbands to respect and fear them; and to show this by a ready obedience to their lawful commands, a ready compliance with their lawful appointments; but they must not allow their fear of their husbands to lead them to neglect their duty as Christians, or to violate the law of their Lord and Master. This was a strong temptation, for heathen husbands were often very arbitrary; and the existing laws as well as customs put the happiness of their wives in their power to a degree of which, from the state of things which the progress of religion and civilisation and law has produced in this country, we happily can form but an inadequate conception. So long as the will of their husbands did not run counter to the will of their Lord, they could scarcely be too submissive; but when they forbade what he commanded, or commanded what he forbade, then the reply must be ready to be respectfully made and steadily

¹ John viii. 39.

acted out, "We must obey God rather than man." 'I am under strong obligations to you, but I am under infinitely stronger obligations to him. I would not willingly incur your displeasure, but I dare not subject myself to his indignation.'

And so it must be still. Every Christian wife must remember that she has higher duties than those she owes to her husband, even those she owes to her God and Saviour; and whenever these come, as they sometimes do, into competition, she must not be "afraid with any amazement," but calmly say, 'I would willingly do and suffer very much for my nearest and dearest earthly relation, but I will not sin for him. His lordship does not extend to my mind and conscience: as to these, I have one Lord, the Lord who bought me; my Master is in heaven.' In this case, as in every other of a similar kind, it is proper that the individual should carefully guard against mistaking humour for principle, and be very sure that the compliance with a husband's will is indeed incompatible with obedience to a Saviour's, before such a course is adopted; but when this is made clearly out to the conscience, there must be no hesitation; we must deny ourselves, our best, most useful human affections, and follow Him. If in this sense a child do not hate his father, a brother his sister, a wife her husband, they are not fit for being Christ's disciples. In matters of conscience, all Christians, whether men or women, whatever relation in domestic or civil society they may occupy, must be principled, decided, resolute, firm. All Christians, of whatever sex and in whatever station, must "add to their faith knowledge," to enable them to discern their various duties, to understand their various obligations and their comparative strength; "and to faith" and "knowledge," or enlightened faith, they must add "virtue," that is, fortitude to enable them at all hazards to perform the

one and discharge the other.¹ They must learn not to be "afraid of man's terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in their heart, and make him their fear and their dread;" and fearing him, they will know no other fear. An enlightened fear of God will equally lead a Christian wife to yield all due respect and obedience to her husband, and to refuse that species and degree of respect and obedience which are due only to God.

This superiority to fear in matters of duty seems spoken of as a point of resemblance to Sarah. It is plain from the slight hints we have in Genesis, that she was not deficient in firmness of character, which sprung out of the faith ascribed to her in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the hope in God by which she, in common with the other holy women, was characterized.

It may not be improper to state that a somewhat different view has been entertained of the reference and design of this concluding clause. In the very passage where Sarah's respect for her husband, manifested in her calling him lord, is recorded, she is represented as, under the influence of fear, denying the truth: "Then Sarah," it is said, "denied, for she was afraid."² To this it has been supposed that the apostle refers, as if he said, "Imitate Sarah in what was good, but avoid her failings. Honour your husband, but guard against such fear as would lead you, like Sarah, acting incongruously with her character as a holy woman trusting in God, to deny the truth."³

Such is the apostle's view of the duties of Christian

¹ 2 Pet. i. 5.

² Gen. xviii. 15.

³ The meaning of this passage seems considerably elucidated by including ("as Sarah, whose children you are, obeyed Abraham") in a parenthesis, and connecting "doing what is good, and alarmed with no terrors," with what goes before,—referring to "the holy women generally."—*Vide* "Translation" at the beginning of the volume.

wives, and of the motives which ought to stimulate them to the habitual performance of them. As might be expected, there is a peculiar reference to the circumstances in which Christian females were placed at the period in which the epistle was written, among the nations amid whom those Christians dwelt, to whom it was addressed; but in all its essential principles it is equally applicable to all ages and to all countries. The individual who realizes the force of these motives and exemplifies these precepts, habitually in heart, temper, and behaviour, whatever station she occupies, is a blessing to society, an ornament to the Church of God. Happy is the man who has such a wife. He who has found such a wife has found a good thing, and has obtained favour of the Lord. Happy are the children who have such a mother, happy the family who have such a mistress, happy the congregation which has many such members. "Such a gracious woman retaineth honour." "Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates."¹

PART II.

Out of all the relations in which human beings can be placed to each other, whether as superiors, or inferiors, or equals, grow mutual obligations and reciprocal duties. In no case is the one party free and the other bound. Each has his peculiar right, and each his peculiar duties. The child has rights as well as the parent; the servant has rights as well as the master; the subject has rights as well as the magistrate; and as a necessary consequence of

¹ Prov. xxxi. 30, 31.

this, the parent has duties as well as the child, the master as well as the servant, the magistrate as well as the subject. In none of the relations of human society can the one party with truth say to the other, You are my debtor, but I owe you nothing. The debt of love is a debt which, though we should constantly be paying to all, we never can discharge to any. We must all ever owe love to all; and the particular form in which the various instalments of this inextinguishable debt are to be paid by one individual to another, depends on the relation which subsists between them, and is indeed just the appropriate duty of that relation. We find the Apostle Peter applying this principle, in his statements of the duties of the fundamental and primary relation of domestic life, that of husband and wife. He has stated and enforced the duties of the wife; he has taught the Christian wife what she owes to her husband, even to her unconverted husband, and why she should be conscientious in discharging this debt. He has explained her duty, and the motives by which it is enforced. He now proceeds to show Christian husbands that they have duties as well as rights; and that, while they have important claims on their wives, their wives also have important claims on them,—claims, certainly, not the less sacred and cogent, that they to whom they belong have, in comparatively rare instances, the means of authoritatively enforcing them.

I. THE DUTIES OF CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS.

The view of the duty of the husband to the wife given by the apostle, is, like that given by him of the duty of the wife to the husband, accompanied with a statement of some of the motives which urge to its performance. My object, in the remaining part of this discourse, is to unfold

the meaning of the apostle's injunctions, and to point out the appropriateness and force of the considerations which he adduces in support of these injunctions.

You will observe, that my object is not to give you a full account of the duties of husbands, and of the motives enforcing them. Had that been my design, I should have taken for my subject the whole of the Christian law, as laid down in the following passages of Scripture—passages which I hope every husband in this assembly has engraved on the tablet not only of his memory, but of his heart: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy, and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies, for he who loveth his wife loveth himself: for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless, let every one of you, in particular, so love his wife even as himself. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.”¹

My object is a much more limited one. Taking for granted, with the apostle, that the husbands addressed were possessed of that peculiar affection, without the possession of the elements of which the marriage relation ought never to be formed, and without the careful cultivation and steady development of which the duties of that

¹ Eph. v. 25-33; Col. iii. 19.

relation cannot be performed nor its comforts enjoyed, I mean to confine myself to those manifestations of this principle, and those motives urging to these manifestations, to which the apostle's object naturally led him particularly to advert, in showing the Christians to whom he was writing, living in the midst of heathens ignorant of their religion, how to "have their conversation honest among the Gentiles, that so with well-doing they might put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." For this purpose he exhorts Christian subjects and Christian servants to be particularly attentive to their civil and domestic duties; for this purpose he exhorts Christian wives to be exemplary in all their conjugal duties; and for this purpose he, in our text, exhorts Christian husbands to "dwell with their wives according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs of the grace of life, that their prayers be not hindered."

A certain degree of obscurity is cast over this passage, by the manner in which it is construed in our version. I should think few intelligent persons have ever read the passage without feeling as if the first reason given for honouring the wife were a somewhat paradoxical one. It seems very reasonable that the Christian husband should honour the Christian wife, because she is equally with himself an "heir of the grace of life;" but it seems strange, that her being the weaker vessel should be assigned as a reason why she should be *honoured*. That is a very good, a very persuasive reason, to sympathize with her, to help her, to be kind to her; but it does not seem to have much cogency as a reason for honouring her. On looking into the text as it came from the apostle's pen, there appears no trace of this apparent incongruity. The words translated, "to the wife, as to the weaker vessel,"¹ and which

¹ Ὡς ἀδυναστεία σκεύους τῇ γυναίκει.

might with equal propriety be rendered, “with the wife as with the weaker vessel,” immediately follow the words “dwell according to knowledge,” and precede, instead of following, as from our version we would naturally suppose, the words “giving honour.” These are plainly intended to qualify the first clause, just as the words, “as being heirs of the grace of life,” are intended to qualify the second. The wife being the weaker vessel is the reason why the husband should “dwell with her according to knowledge,” just as her being a fellow-heir of the grace of life is the reason why he should honour her;¹ and the importance of preventing any hindrance to their prayers is a motive equally bearing on both of the duties enjoined. The method, then, which seems best fitted to bring out the meaning and force of the text is, first, to explain the first injunction, “Dwell with the wife according to knowledge,” and its appropriate motive, “She is the weaker vessel;” then the second injunction, and its appropriate motive, “Honour her, as she is a joint-heir of the grace of life;” and finally, the concluding consideration, which is equally fitted for giving force to both these injunctions.

§ 1. *To “dwell with the wife according to knowledge, as being the weaker vessel.”*

Let us now proceed to the illustration of the first injunction, and its appropriate motive: “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell according to knowledge with the wife—that is, each with his own wife—as being the weaker vessel.” Let the husband dwell with his wife. Let him dwell with her according to knowledge. What is the meaning of these expressions? The expression, Let the husband dwell with his wife, seems naturally to suggest the idea that, in the

¹ ὅτι bis hic ponitur: priore loco pertinet ad γινῶσκον, altero ad τιμὴν. Γινῶσκον poscit infirmitas vasis; Τιμὴν co-hæreditas injungit.—BENGEL.

apostle's estimation, each family should have a separate habitation; that they should not only dwell in the same house, but that as every man should have his own wife, and every woman her own husband, every man and wife should have their own house. The son, when he becomes a husband, should "leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife."¹ This is the arrangement dictated by nature and reason,—an arrangement seldom disregarded without uncomfortable consequences. Different households should have, in all ordinary circumstances, different houses. Many dishonourable things among the Gentiles originated in the neglect of this arrangement.

But this, though apparently included in the injunction, does not exhaust its meaning. It plainly implies, that not only should the husband and wife have the same and a separate house, but that the husband as well as the wife should ordinarily, habitually, dwell in that house. Wives are, no doubt, peculiarly bound to be "keepers at home:" that is their principal and all but exclusive scene of duty and usefulness. But husbands, too, are bound, in all ordinary circumstances, to make their house their home. "It is absurd," as has been justly said, "for those who have no prospect of dwelling together, to enter into the marriage state; and they who are already in it should not be unnecessarily abroad." Circumstances may occur which may make absence from home, even for a considerable time, a duty on the part of the husband; but these are exceptions from the general rule. There is much force in the inspired apothegm, "As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place."² "Those persons," says Baxter, "live contrary to the nature of this relation, who live a great part of their lives asunder as many do, for worldly respects: when they have several houses, posses-

¹ Gen. ii. 24.

² Prov. xxvii. 8.

sions, or trades, and the husband must live at one and the wife at the other, for their commodity sake, and only come together once in a week, or in many weeks. Where this is done without great necessity, it is a constant violation of their duties. And so it is for men to go to trade or live beyond sea, or in another land, and leave their wives behind them; yea, though they have their wives' consent, it is an unlawful course, except in a case of mere necessity or public service, or where they are able to say that the benefits are likely to be greater to the soul and body than the loss. The offices which husbands and wives are bound to perform for one another, are such as for the most part suppose them dwelling under the same roof, like the offices of the members of the body for each other, which they cannot perform if they are dismembered and divided." How can a man from home discharge his duties to his household? Family devotion, family instruction, family discipline, must all, so far as he is concerned, be neglected.

There are husbands who are seldom from home in the sense now explained, who yet are very deficient in the duty here enjoined—dwelling with their wives. Though never from home in one way, they are but seldom at home in another. Their leisure hours are spent abroad. They seem fonder of almost any society than the society of their wives. It is a shrewd remark, which observation but too fully confirms, "When a married man, a husband, a father, is fond of spending his evenings abroad, it implies something bad, and predicts something worse."¹ To dwell with the wife is to associate with her as the husband's chosen companion and confidential friend. There are some husbands who never consult their wives, and even leave them to learn from a third person matters in which they are deeply concerned. This is not as it should be. He who enters into

¹ Jay.

the spirit of the apostle's advice, will, amid the occupations of the day, please himself with the thought of enjoying his wife's society in the evening, as the best refreshment after his toils. Her presence will make his own mansion, however humble, far more agreeable to him than any other which he may occasionally visit. The anxieties and cares attendant on her maternal and domestic character he will endeavour to soothe and relieve. When she is happy, he will be happy: when she is afflicted, he will be afflicted. He will rejoice with her when she rejoices, and weep with her when she weeps. His heart will safely trust in her, and, by a constant interchange of kind offices, he will increase both in her and in himself that entire confidential esteem and love which makes all relative duties easy and pleasant.¹ This is for the husband to dwell with the wife.

But what are we to understand by dwelling with her "according to knowledge?" These words may mean, Let the Christian husband, in his intimate and habitual intercourse with his wife, conduct himself like a well-instructed Christian man, who knows the law of Jesus Christ, and the powerful motives by which it is enforced. We rather think, however, that the meaning is, Let him conduct himself intelligently, wisely, prudently. There is no prescribing particular rules in a case of this kind. "Wisdom is profitable to direct;" and as it is profitable, so is it necessary. In every department of relative duty, wise consideration, prudent tact, is necessary; in none more than in the conjugal department. The peace of the family, the comfort, and even the spiritual improvement, both of the wife and of the husband, depend on this holy discretion. This knowledge, or wisdom, will enable him to form a just estimate of his wife's character, of her talents, her acquirements, her temper, her foibles, and will lead him to act

¹ Stennett.

accordingly. Christian husbands should act "circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." It is the more necessary that such wisdom be exercised, from the difficulty of guarding equally against a foolish fondness, which suffers sin on the object of affection, and a forbidding harshness of demeanour, which disheartens and discourages. The wife is not a servant who can be dismissed; not an ordinary friend, who, if found unsuitable, can be quietly parted with. She is joined to thee by a bond which, in ordinary cases, nothing but death can dissolve. She is the mother of thy children: regard to her, regard to them, regard to thyself, all require thee to dwell with her according to knowledge. Act wisely, and the results will be unspeakably advantageous. Act foolishly, and there is no saying what the consequences of this, even in one instance, may be. Beware of in any way injuring her; beware of in any way being injured by her. Seek to bless her, and to make her a blessing to you, to your children, to all with whom she is connected.

The apostle notices particularly one reason why the husband should dwell according to knowledge with the wife. She is "the weaker vessel." The word translated "vessel" seems here to mean framework or fabric. Both man and woman are a framework or fabric formed by God. Both are weak; but the woman is the weaker. Both in body and mind some women are stronger than some men; but in ordinary cases, the female, in the human as in other species of living creatures, is weaker than the male. In delicacy of apprehension, both intellectual and moral, and in capacity of passive endurance, the woman's mind is often, I apprehend, far superior to the man's. But, generally speaking, the woman is the weaker fabric. She has a feebler corporeal frame; and her mental constitution, especially the sensitive part of it, is such as to require cautious, kind, even tender treatment from those about her. There-

fore it is meet that her husband should sustain her weakness, and bear with her infirmities.

It is foolish, and productive of mischief, to treat wives as if they were children. It degrades them in their own estimation, and prevents their improvement. But it is wise, and productive of the best consequences, to treat them as what they are—women, beings of keener sensibilities and feebler frames than ours; and to have a kind consideration for their peculiar privations and sufferings, their wearisome days and sleepless nights, their anxieties and sorrows, their watchings over our sick and dying children, and their angel-like ministrations to ourselves in the season of affliction. The feebleness of their frame should keep husbands in mind of the insecure tenure by which they possess them, and lead them to dwell with them, as they will wish they had done, when they must dwell with them no longer.

The apostle does not suppose a Christian husband can be intentionally unkind to his wife; but he supposes that from want of consideration he may do injury in a degree he little thinks, to one whom he loves; and therefore he puts him in mind that his wife is the weaker vessel, and that it is his duty to dwell with her “according to knowledge.” Very worthy men, not at all deficient in good sense or in good feeling either, but not distinguished by tact or sensibility, need the hint; and a great deal of suffering, not the less severe that it is not designed, and cannot be complained of, might be saved if it were but attended to.

“ It is well to mark how a passing word—
Too lightly said, and too deeply heard—
Or a harsh reproof, or a look unkind,
May spoil the peace of a sensitive mind.”¹

¹ C. Fry.

§ 1. *“To honour the wife as a fellow-heir of the grace of life.”*

The second injunction to Christian husbands is, “Give honour to the wives, as being heirs together,” or joint-heirs, “of the grace of life.” Here again we have first the precept, and then the motive. The Christian husband is to honour his wife. Some interpreters have supposed that the “honour” here spoken of is an honourable maintenance. There can be no doubt that the word “honour” is repeatedly used with this signification in the New Testament;¹ and there is as little doubt that it is the duty of a husband to give to his wife all the comforts which his circumstances in life can afford, and provide for her both while he lives, and, in all practicable cases, after his death; but we cannot look at the close of the sentence without perceiving that it is not to this that the apostle refers. It is such honour as properly belongs to the wife as “an heir of the grace of life.” It is quite plain that the Christian husband is supposed to have a Christian wife; and he is not to treat her as the heathen treated their wives, or even as the Jews treated theirs. He is to view her as spiritually standing on the same level with himself, being in Christ Jesus, “where there is neither male nor female,” any more than Jew or Greek, bond or free. He is to esteem her as a “child of God,” “a daughter of the Lord God Almighty,” “an heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ Jesus.” He is to love her, because Christ loves her, and because she loves Christ. He is to respect her as a living image of the Redeemer, having received out of his fulness grace for grace.

The apostle particularly notices, that the wives are to be honoured as, equally with their husbands, heirs of the grace

¹ Matt. xv. 6; 1 Tim. v. 17; Acts xxviii. 10, τιμαίς.

of life. "The grace of life." Grace is here favour, the favour of God; not in the sense of the principle in the divine mind, but of some signal effect and manifestation of it. The grace or favour of life is that divine grace or favour which consists in life. The "life" referred to is that eternal life which is "the grace to be brought to us at the coming of our Lord Jesus," "the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord," "the salvation that is in him with eternal glory." "Life is," as Leighton says, "a sweet word, but sweetest of all in this sense: That life above is indeed only worthy the name. This we have here, in comparison, let it not be called life, but a continual dying, an incessant journey towards the grave. If you reckon years, it is but a short moment to him who attains the fullest old age; but reckon miseries and sorrows, it is long to him who dies young." This life is the fruit of the divine favour. It is the GRACE of life. "If we consider but a little," to quote the good Archbishop again, "what it is, what we are, that this is the grace of life, will quickly be out of question with us; and we shall be most gladly content to hold it thus, by deed of gift, and shall admire and extol that grace that bestows it."

Christian husbands and Christian wives are equally heirs of this grace of life; and no consideration is so much fitted to lead a Christian husband to honour his wife as this. It has been finely said: "This is that which most strongly binds these duties on the hearts of husbands and wives, and indeed most strongly binds their hearts together, and makes them one. If each be reconciled to God in Christ, and so heirs of the grace of life, and one with God, then are they truly one in God, each with other; and that is the surest and sweetest union that can be. Natural love hath risen very high in some husbands and wives, but the highest of it falls very far short of that which holds in God. Hearts

concentrating on him are most excellently one. That love which is cemented by youth and beauty, when these moulder and decay, as they do soon, it fades too. That is somewhat purer, and so more lasting, that holds in a natural or moral harmony of minds; yet these likewise may alter and change by some great accident. But the most refined, most spiritual, and most indissoluble, is that which is knit with the highest and purest spirit. And the ignorance or disregard of this is the true cause of so much bitterness, or so little true sweetness, in the life of most married persons, because God is left out; because they meet not as one in Him. Loath will they be to despise one another that are both bought with the precious blood of one Redeemer, and loath to grieve one another. Being in him brought into peace with God, they will entertain true peace between themselves, and not suffer anything to disturb it. They have hopes to meet one day, where there is nothing but perfect concord and peace. They will therefore live as heirs of that life here, and make their present state as like to heaven as they can, and so a pledge and evidence of their title to that inheritance of peace which is there laid up for them. And they will not fail to put one another often in mind of these hopes and that inheritance, and to advance and further each other towards it. Where this is not minded, it is to little purpose to speak of other rules. Where neither party aspires to this heirship, live they otherwise as they will, there is one common inheritance abiding them, one inheritance of everlasting flames; and as they increase the sin and guiltiness of each other by their irreligious conversation, so that which some of them do wickedly here on no great cause, they shall have full cause for doing there—curse the time of their coming together; and that shall be a piece of their exercise for ever. But happy those persons, in any society of marriage or friendship, who con-

verse so together here as those that shall live so eternally together in glory.”¹

The Christian husband, when he realizes these truths, cannot but honour his Christian partner; cannot but treat her with cordial respect as one, equally with himself, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ,—already blessed with many invaluable heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ, standing in a most dignified relation to the great God our Saviour, animated by his Spirit and adorned by his image, and destined to be one day perfectly like him, their common life, when he appears in his glory, and to become an inheritor of that blessed world where they “do not marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God.”²

It is obvious that this is a motive which in its full force can be felt only by a Christian husband in reference to his duty to a Christian wife. But it suggests strong reason to the Christian husband to do his duty even in reference to an unconverted wife. She belongs to the race of which Christ is the Saviour. She is capable of becoming an heir of the grace of life; and her husband's discharge of conjugal duties, under the influence of the faith of the gospel, is well calculated to remove prejudice against vital Christianity, and, in connection with other means for her conversion which Christian principle and conjugal love will induce him to employ, may very probably be blessed, to the joining them together in a union more intimate and sacred than even that of marriage—a union over which the severing stroke of death has no power. “How knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?”³

¹ Leighton.

² Matt. xxii. 30.

³ 1 Cor. vii. 16.

II. MOTIVE ADDRESSED TO CHRISTIAN HUSBANDS TO THE DISCHARGE OF THESE DUTIES: "THAT THEIR PRAYERS BE NOT HINDERED."

Having thus shortly illustrated the two injunctions, with the appropriate motives by which they are respectively enforced, let us, ere we close, shortly attend to the general consideration which bears equally on both these injunctions. Christian husbands are to dwell with their wives according to knowledge, and to give honour to them, "that their prayers be not hindered." It is plainly taken for granted here, that Christians habitually engage in prayer. "The heirs of life," as Leighton says, "cannot live without prayer: none of them is dumb; they all speak." They all seek intercourse with their heavenly Father. Having the spirit of adoption, they cry, Abba, Father. They pray in secret; and when two of these heirs are brought together in the closest of human relations, they pray together, and a great deal of their improvement and happiness depends on these prayers together and apart. Anything which hinders the latter materially interferes with the former. Now it is quite plain, that the neglect of conjugal duty on the part of the husband to the wife, is fitted to hinder both his own prayers and the prayers of his wife, and their common prayers. The temper that leads him to neglect his duty to his wife, unfits him for his duty to his God; and though human unkindness, even from our best human friend, should but lead us to go with greater alacrity to Him who is a friend at all times, yet the jars and contentions of husband and wife are in their own nature calculated so to embitter the spirit of both as to unfit for prayer, which should always be presented with holy hands, and must be offered without wrath if it is to be offered without doubting.

There seems in these words a direct reference to family

prayers.¹ How can they be attended to at all, if the husband do not dwell with his wife? how can they be usefully attended to, if they dwell not together in unity? How are they likely to come to that agreement in reference to things which they ask, and the temper and disposition in which they ask them, which is so necessary to prayer serving its purpose either on their own minds, or as an appointed means of having our need supplied according to God's glorious riches? If family prayers are hindered, what hope of family prosperity, in the best sense of the words? and if conjugal duty is neglected, how can they but be hindered? They are in danger of being neglected, or disturbed, or discontinued. Let, then, Christian husbands, and wives too, guard against everything which may hinder family prayer. Let their whole conduct toward each other look back and forward to the family altar. Let it be consistent with devotion, preparatory to it, indicative of its influence. Avoid whatever makes an introduction into the divine presence less easy or less delightful. Keep open a passage wide enough to advance together to the throne of grace: go hand in hand. Agree "touching the things which ye shall ask, and it shall be done for you of your Father in heaven."²

The passage before us is merely a particular application of a great general principle: the connection between holy conduct and devotional exercises. They act and re-act on one another. The more conscientiously we perform our various duties, the more shall we be disposed for, the more enjoyment shall we find in, and the more advantages shall we derive from, our devotional exercises; and the more we engage in devotional exercises in a right spirit, the more shall we be inclined and enabled, "in all holy conversation and godliness," to "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour

¹ See note A.

² Jay.

in all things." Calling on the name of the Lord, and departing from iniquity, are closely conjoined. To secure frequency, constancy, comfort in prayer, we must live holily; and to secure our living holily, we must be "constant in prayer:" "praying always, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance."

Thus have I finished my illustrations of the apostle's exposition and enforcement of conjugal duties. I conclude in the words of an honoured elder brother (Mr Jay), whom I have more than once referred to in this discourse, and whose works generally I most cordially recommend as a family book: "Let all who stand in the marriage relation be willing to know and practise the duties which spring from it. Enter, my brethren and sisters, the temple of Revelation, and bow before the divine oracle. Say, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth. Extract from the scripture the mind of God concerning yourselves individually. Take home the words I have been explaining. Do not, ye husbands, take away the duties of the wife, nor, ye wives, the duties of the husband, but both of you respectively your own, and say: 'O that my feet were directed to keep thy statutes: I have chosen the way of truth; thy judgments have I laid before me: through thy precepts I get understanding, therefore I hate every false way: I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.'"¹

¹ See note B.

NOTE A. p. 236.

It is quite possible that the apostle may have a reference to a practice exemplified and recommended by the good PHILIP HENRY. "Besides this" (secret prayer), "he and his wife constantly prayed together morning and evening: and never, if they were together at home or abroad, was it intermitted; and from his own experience of the benefit of this practice, he would take all opportunities to recommend it to those in that relation, as conducing very much to the comfort of it, and to their furtherance in that which he would often say is the great duty of yoke-fellows; and that is 'to do all they can to help one another to heaven.' He would say that this duty of husbands and wives praying together is intimated in that of the apostle, 1 Pet. iii. 7, where they are exhorted to 'live as heirs of the grace of life, that their prayers' (especially their prayers together) 'be not hindered;' that nothing may be done to hinder them *from* praying together, nor to hinder them *in* it, nor to spoil the success of their prayers. This sanctifies the relation, and fetcheth in a blessing upon it, makes the comforts of it the more sweet, and the cares and crosses of it the more easy, and is an excellent means of preserving and increasing love in the relation. Many to whom he had recommended the practice of this duty have blessed God for him, and for his advice concerning it."—*An Account of the Life and Death of Mr Philip Henry, by his Son*, p. 58. Lond. 1712.

NOTE B. p. 237.

"Let such married persons as God hath blessed in this kind" (by their being "equally yoked," in the best sense), "learn what cause they have to be thankful to God, either for other. Let the jars and discord that they see between other men and women mismatched, and the cross and cursed carriage of them either toward other, together with the manifold annoyances and grievous mischiefs and inconveniences that ensue ordinarily thereupon, be a means to put them in mind of God's great mercy and goodness toward them, and to make them more thankful to him for the same. And since they have received either other from God, let them herein show their thankfulness

unto God, by endeavouring to bring either other nearer unto God, by helping either other forward in the good ways of God. Do either with other as Anna did with her son Samuel—as she had him of God, so she bestowed him on God again: return each other again to God, and labour to return them better than they received them. The better they shall make either other, and the nearer they shall bring either other to God, the more good through God's goodness shall they have either of other. The more man and wife profit in the fear of God, the more comfortably and contentedly shall they live together, the better shall it be for them both.”—GATAKER: ‘*A wife indeed.*’

This most learned man's sermons, entitled “Marriage Prayer,” “A Good Wife God's Gift,” “A Wife Indeed,” and “Marriage Duties,” are full of important practical instruction, quaintly but often very impressively stated. Take a specimen or two. “As it were a thing prodigious and monstrous in nature for the rib in the body to stand either equal with or above the head; so we may well say, that a man-kind woman, or a masterly wife, is even a monster in nature. *Γυνή δὲ νικῶσ' ἄνδρα κακόν ἐστι μέγα.*” “A masterly wife is as much despised and derided for taking rule over her husband, as he for yielding to it; and that not only among those that be godly and religious, but even among those that be but natural men and women.” “A Christian married man is bound to believe and persuade himself, not that his wife is the wisest or the fairest or the best conditioned woman in the world; but that she is the fittest wife for him, that God hath allotted her to him, and therefore [he is bound] to rest himself contented in her, and satisfied with her, and live with her with as much alacrity and cheerfulness as may be. And as parents delight in their children not because they are fair or wise or witty, but because they are their children; and therefore, however seeing better parts in others, they could be content to change quality for quality, yet they will not exchange child for child; so a man is to love and delight in his wife, even for this cause that she is his wife, and howsoever it may be he could wish some of her parts better, yet to rejoice in her as they are.” “Faith, and the fear of God, and godliness, are to be exercised, as well in the special duties of our several callings, as in the general duties of Christianity; and so run through our

whole life, as the woof through the web ; and so among other through all the offices of the married state."

JEREMY TAYLOR's "Marriage Ring," in his ENIATTOΣ, is also well worth perusing. What can be more beautiful than his eulogy on marriage? "Marriage was ordained by God, instituted in paradise ; the relief of a natural necessity, and the first blessing from the Lord. Marriage is a school and exercise of virtue. Here is the proper scene of piety and patience, of the duty of parents and the charity of relatives ; here kindness is spread abroad, and love is united and made firm as a centre. Marriage is the nursery of heaven, fills up the numbers of the elect, and hath in it the labours of love and the delicacies of friendship, the blessing of society and the union of hands and hearts. Marriage is the mother of the world, and preserves kingdoms, and fills cities, and churches, and heaven itself. Like the useful bee, marriage builds a house, and gathers sweetness from every flower, and labours, and unites into societies and republics, and sends out colonies, and feeds the world with delicacies, and obeys their king and keeps order, and exercises many virtues, and promotes the interest of mankind, and is that state of good things to which God hath designed the present constitution of the world."

DISCOURSE XV.

DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR CIVIL AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS.

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing: knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear; having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing.”—1 PET. iii. 8-17.

“LET not your good be evil spoken of,” says the Apostle Paul to the Christians of Rome; and the injunction is equally applicable to, equally obligatory on, Christians of all countries and ages.

The religion of Christians is emphatically their “good thing,” their most precious treasure, their most valuable possession. Christianity, viewed not merely as exhibiting a perfect system of religious and moral truth, and prescribing a complete course of religious and moral discipline, but considered also as “the ministration of the Spirit”—of truth, and purity, and happiness—to ignorant, deluded,

depraved, miserable men,—the appointed and the only medium through which God; the Author of all good, will bestow on mankind forgiveness, sanctification, and eternal life,—“the power of God unto salvation,”—is plainly inexpressibly, inestimably excellent and valuable. “It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it, and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of pure gold. No mention shall be made of coral or of pearls; for its price is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.”

To him who cordially embraces it, it is an abundant, perennial fountain of the most precious blessings. It is in him “a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life;” it gives peace to his conscience, and purity to his heart; it guides him in perplexity, sustains him in weakness, defends him in danger, and comforts him in sorrow; it quells his fears and animates his hopes; it stimulates his indolence, and directs his activity; it sweetens the cup of death, and brightens the prospect of eternity. And even with regard to those who neglect or oppose it, when brought within the sphere of its indirect influence, though by increasing their responsibilities it increases their hazards, it yet materially adds both to the number and security of their comforts. How much happier is the state of society in Britain than in any heathen country, and how much of this favourable difference is to be traced to Christianity! How much do those who neglect, those who would destroy Christianity, owe to it!

It is strange that so good a thing should be evil spoken of. Of it, as of its Author, it may well be asked, “Why, what evil has it done?” Yet so it is; in all countries and ages this incomparably good thing has been evil spoken of. Its doctrines have been misstated, and its tendencies mis-

represented. Its divine origin has been called in question and denied; and its effects both on the character and happiness of mankind, both in their individual and social capacities, have been represented as in a high degree injurious. In no case have names been more misapplied and things confounded than here. Sweet has been termed bitter; light, darkness; and good, evil.

To expect to render unadulterated Christianity, all excellent as it is, admired by, or even palatable to, a world sunk in ignorance and sin, "lying under the wicked one," without a radical revolution in their sentiments and habits, is a most unreasonable anticipation. Men will prefer darkness to light while their deeds are evil. But though it be impossible, while worldly and wicked men and the religion of Christ continue what they are, to extinguish malignant feeling and silence reproachful speeches in reference to the gospel; yet it is most true that the sphere of these calumnies would be considerably narrowed, the plausibility of these misrepresentations greatly lessened, and of consequence their probable mischievous effect much diminished, were it not for the improprieties and imprudences of the professed, and even of the real friends of Christianity. The behaviour of false disciples has frequently drawn not only much deserved reproach on themselves, but also much unmerited odium on the cause for which they had no true regard; and, what is still more to be deplored, the temper and conduct of those to whom that cause was really dear, have been too often such as to make their good evil spoken of.

Nor will this fact, however much to be lamented, appear difficult to be accounted for by any one who is acquainted with the very imperfect state of even regenerated human nature in this world. Through inadvertency, want of experience, error in judgment, unexpected temptation,

and other evils inseparable from our present condition, persons whose prevailing chief desire is, "to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things," are in constant hazard, by something in their sentiments or dispositions, or language, or conduct, of giving strength to the prejudices of worldly men against Christianity, and plausibility to the false and calumnious misrepresentations to which those prejudices give origin. To guard against this evil seems the great object of the Apostle Peter, in that section of his epistle, part of which forms the subject of the present discourse.

That section commences with the 12th verse of the second chapter, and terminates with the 17th verse of the third. Its theme is, "Have your conversation honest," that is, honourable, "among the Gentiles; that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." In other words, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." "Let not your good be evil spoken of." In the peculiarities of the faith and experience of the Christian, in the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, and in the inner life of him who believes it, there is much, when brought strongly out, to excite the astonishment and even the disgust of an ungodly world; and though, to prevent this, the Christian must neither conceal the one nor disavow the other, nor be ashamed of either, yet, if he would avoid the evil of bringing reproach on his religion, and gain the good of constraining even enemies to feel its power and acknowledge its excellence, he must endeavour to make stand out in strong relief those parts of the Christian system and character, of which even an unregenerate man is, to a considerable extent, a judge; and which, approving themselves to his understanding and conscience and affections, are fitted to allay

his prejudices against the system of which they form an essential part.

In accordance with this principle, the apostle, in order to the gaining of the end in view, exhorts Christians to a scrupulously exact discharge of the duties which rise out of the relations of civil and domestic society, especially in cases where the persons with whom they were connected in these relations were not Christians. He calls upon them, as members of civil society, to yield a cheerful obedience to the commands, and a ready submission to the arrangements, of the constituted authorities, whether supreme or subordinate, so far as compliance with these would not compromise their allegiance to the absolutely Supreme Ruler: "Submit to every institution of man for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them who do well;" and, while showing a peculiar regard to the Christian society of which they were members, to manifest a proper respect for every human being, whatever might be his religious opinions or his place in civil society, thus "honouring all men." He calls on Christian servants, who were generally slaves, to be subject to their own masters, who were generally heathens; and warns them against allowing the unreasonableness and severity of the treatment which they might receive so to influence their minds as to induce them to neglect their duties, or to be negligent in performing them. He calls on Christian wives to be subject to their own husbands, even when unconverted men; and he calls on Christian husbands to be equally conscientious in the discharge of their duties to their wives. He then "finally," in the passage of which the text is a part, thus closing this series of exhortations, lays before them a variety of injunctions of a more general nature, obligatory, not on particular classes, but on the whole body of Christians.

These injunctions naturally range themselves under three heads, as they refer to the temper and conduct which Christians should cherish and exemplify towards each other, towards mankind at large, and towards their persecutors, or those who treated them injuriously on account of their religion. Within the limits of the Christian society they were to be distinguished by a community of views and feelings, the characteristic views and feelings of the society, and by cherishing and displaying brotherly love. "Be of the same mind; have compassion one of another,"—or rather, have the same feelings; be united in heart as well as in mind; "love as brethren." Within and without these limits, they were to manifest "pitifulness," that is, mercifulness, kind-heartedness; and "courtesy," that is, affability and kindness; or, according to another reading very generally adopted, humility, "be pitiful, be humble-minded." And with regard to those who persecuted and despitefully used them, they were not to resent such treatment, but to meet it by a display of the directly opposite sentiments: they were to guard against an undue fear of their persecutors by cultivating the supreme fear due to God; and they were always to be ready to give an account of their faith and hope, and of the grounds on which these rested, to those who called them in question for them, maintaining at once "a good conscience" and "a good conversation." Some of these injunctions are given without any motive being urged but the general one, that this was necessary in order to have their conversation honest among the Gentiles; while others, especially those belonging to the last class, are enforced by a variety of appropriate considerations.

It is always desirable to look at a passage of Scripture not only in itself, but in its connection. When we act otherwise, we not only are all but sure to lose much of its beauty and force, but in many cases we are in danger of

entirely misapprehending its reference and mistaking its meaning. When, as in the case before us, we can distinctly see to what particular class of persons injunctions are addressed, and what is the object in addressing such injunctions to such a class, we can the more readily discover the practical improvement we ought to make of them, and are the more likely to find that particular portion of "Scripture given by inspiration of God, profitable to us for doctrine and reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness," that as Christian men we may be made "perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work."

I. DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS TO EACH OTHER.

Let us then, in the first place, turn our attention to those injunctions which refer to the temper Christians should cherish, and the conduct they should pursue, in reference to each other. These injunctions are three: "Be all of one mind; having (or have) compassion one of another; love as brethren." Strictly speaking, all the terms here employed are descriptive of internal habits and dispositions; but these terms are here, like similar terms both in the Scriptures and common language, used to signify not only the inward sentiment, but the outward expression of it. When we say "Be kind," we mean not merely 'cherish benevolent feelings, be kindly affectioned,' but 'manifest this by friendly behaviour, by using the language and performing the offices of kindness.' So when the apostle says, "Be of one mind; be united in your affections; love as brethren," he means, 'Be and appear to be united in your views and feelings; cherish and manifest brotherly love toward each other.'

The external manifestations of unity and love, apart from the internal principle, do not fulfil the apostle's injunction.

They are worse than valueless; they are criminal. They are a beautiful body dead, or, if animated, animated by the demon of deceit. But, on the other hand, these principles, excellent as they are, unless embodied in suitable actions and habits, would not at all serve the purpose which the apostle has in view,—the making an impression favourable to Christianity and to Christians, on the minds even of unconverted men.

§ 1. *To cultivate and manifest union of sentiment.*

Keeping this general remark in view, let us proceed to the consideration of the first of these injunctions, “Be ye all of one mind.”¹ We have the same, or a very similar, injunction repeatedly given by the Apostle Paul. “Be of one mind,” says he to the Roman churches, “one towards another;” “Be like-minded towards one another, according to Christ Jesus, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” To the Corinthians he says, “Brethren, I beseech you that ye be perfectly joined in the same mind and in the same judgment;” “Brethren, be of one mind.” And to the Philippians, “Be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; stand fast in one spirit, with one mind.”² An injunction so frequently repeated, so warmly urged, by men who wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, must be important. Let us endeavour distinctly to apprehend its meaning; for if we do not distinctly understand it, we are not likely accurately to obey it.

The term “mind” is frequently, perhaps usually, employed in Scripture to signify the whole inner man, including both the intellect and the affections; what we call

¹ Πάντες ὁμόφρονες.

² Rom. xii. 16, xv. 5, 6; 1 Cor. i. 10; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Phil. i. 27, ii. 2.

figuratively both the head and the heart. To "have the mind of Christ in us," is to think and feel as Christ did, to have the same views of truth as he had, and to be similarly affected by these views. To "mind the things of the flesh," is to make present sensible things, "things seen and temporal," the great subjects of our thoughts, and the great objects of our affections. "To mind the things of the spirit," is to make the realities of the invisible and future world, "the things unseen and eternal"—for our knowledge of which we are entirely indebted to the Spirit—the great subjects of our thoughts, and the great objects of our affections.¹

When, however, the term is used along with, and, as it were, in contradistinction to, some other term descriptive of affection and feeling, it is to be viewed as denoting sentiment or opinion. This is the case here. The union of feeling, the common affections by which Christians should be characterized, are enjoined in the second clause of the verse, which may be justly rendered, "have the same feelings."² We therefore consider the injunction before us as equivalent to, 'have, and show that you have, the same sentiments.'

"Be of one mind" does not mean, 'Have the same sentiments on all subjects,' or even, 'Have the same sentiments on all subjects connected with religion.' Compliance with such an injunction is impossible, so long as the measure of mental faculty and the means of information are different

¹ Phil. ii. 3; Rom. viii. 5.

² Συμπαθεῖς, similiter affecti. This is one of the ἀπαξ λεγόμενα. The cognate verb occurs Heb. iv. 15, x. 34. Raphelius furnishes a fine illustration of the meaning of the word, in a passage from Polybius: "Certainly, if Scipio was peculiarly fitted by nature for anything, it was for this, that he should inspire confidence in the minds of men." Καὶ συμπαθεῖς ποιῆσαι τοὺς παρακαλουμένους, 'and transfuse his own feelings into those whom he addressed.'—*Raph. Obs.* vol. ii. p. 760.

in some degree or other in every individual. If a man honestly exercise his mind on the subject brought before it, that is, if he really have a mind of his own, that mind will be in some respects different from every other man's mind.

But it does mean, 'Be united, be entirely united in those views, both doctrinal and practical, the possession of which is essential to the very being of genuine Christianity.' There are such principles; and notwithstanding all the ingenious and perplexing discussions which have taken place respecting fundamental and non-fundamental principles in religion, there is little practical difficulty in determining what are the views in which Christians must be united in mind and judgment.

With regard to doctrines, they are such as the following: As to man's natural estate, that it is one of guilt, and depravity, and helplessness: As to God's character and government, that He is most holy and benignant, and that it is most wise and righteous; that "He is the rock, his work is perfect, all his ways are judgment, a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he;" "His law is holy, just, and good:"¹ As to Jesus Christ, that he is the divinely appointed, the divinely qualified, the divinely accredited, the divine Saviour from guilt, and depravity, and misery; that "his blood cleanseth from all sin;" that "he is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him;" that he will never "cast" out any who come to him; that he was "given for our offences, and raised again for our justification;" that "he is Lord and Judge of all;" that he is the one Master of all his disciples, the only Lord of their consciences:² As to the Holy Spirit, that he is the Divine Author of all that is spiritually right and

¹ Deut. xxxii. 4; Rom. vii. 12.

² 1 John i. 7; Heb. vii. 25; John vi. 37; Rom. iv. 25; Acts x. 36.

good in the views and affections and conduct of mankind, and that in his enlivening, and enlightening, and sanctifying, and consoling influence, he is shed forth abundantly on all who believe on Christ Jesus, as the earnest of their inheritance, as the seal of God on them till the day of final and complete redemption. These are a specimen of the kind of doctrinal principles referred to by the apostle.¹

As to practical principles, in which Christians must be all of one mind, they are such as the following: that "we ought to obey God rather than man;" that "things unseen and eternal" are to be preferred to "things seen and temporal;" that we must "deny ourselves, take up the cross, and follow Christ," wherever he leads us; that the greatest suffering is to be chosen before the least sin; that we must become as little children, in order to enter into the kingdom of God; that "it is more blessed to give than to receive;" that we should "live not to ourselves, but to him who died for us, and who rose again."² With regard to these principles, and such principles as these, Christians must be of one mind. He who is otherwise minded, he who is oppositely minded, is not, and cannot be, a Christian.

The unity of mind which the apostle requires on such subjects can be secured only in one way. The desired and desirable oneness of mind is neither to be obtained by the great mass of Christian men, of moderate intellectual faculties and attainments, implicitly submitting to the decisions of a few master minds; nor by individual Christians making mutual compromises of sentiment: it is to be obtained by all Christians seeking to have in them the mind of their Master, Christ.³ The union of mind they are to seek is

¹ Eph. i. 13, 14.

² Acts v. 29; Matt. xvi. 24, xxviii. 3; Acts xx. 35; 2 Cor. v. 15.

³ The Apostle Paul exhorts the Philippians (ii. 2) τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν—ἵνα.

union in the truth, in "the truth as it is in Jesus." The mind of Christ is in his word. His Spirit is promised to enable us to understand his word. The man who studies that word in a dependence on that Spirit will be made to know and believe the truth which it contains, so far as this is necessary to salvation; and in the degree in which he does so, Christ's mind will become his mind. All who follow this course will, in proportion to the simplicity, and ardour, and perseverance with which they prosecute it, be successful; and in being conformed to the mind of Christ, they will come all to have one mind in reference to each other. And so indeed it is, and always has been, and ever will be. All true Christians, amid all their differences of opinion, are of one mind in reference to the great doctrinal and practical principles of their holy faith,—the principles which pacify the conscience, and purify the heart, and guide the conduct,—the principles by which they live, in which they find the life of their souls, the spring of their spiritual activity, the source of their spiritual comfort.

As to the points on which they differ, so far as they act in character, it will be found that it is their union of mind on the one great principle, that "One is our Master, even Christ,"¹ which leads to a difference of mind respecting those points, uniformly of minor importance. Those Christians who differed in their judgments as to the propriety of observing certain days, were of one mind as to the duty of Christians to yield implicit obedience to the seen will of their common Lord: "He that observed the day observed it to the Lord; and he who did not observe the day, to the Lord he did not observe it."² And giving each other credit for acting with a good conscience "as to the Lord," they

σύμψυχοι, τὸ ἐν φρονεῖντις; and (ver. 5) he shows them how to secure this, τοῦτο γὰρ φρονεῖσθαι ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

¹ Matt. xxiii. 8.

² Rom. xiv. 6.

felt more united by their common mind that the Lord was to be obeyed, than divided by the diversity of their opinions, as to what in such a case was obedience to him.

With regard to the great principles above referred to, the apostolic rule is, "Let us who are perfect be *thus* minded"—"of one mind," "perfectly joined in the same judgment:" having attained to this, "let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."¹ And with regard to the minor points referred to, the rule is, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind," and, "Let no man judge his brother in such matters."² And this is our comfort, that if we walk together, in the great things in which we are of one mind, we are likely ere long to become of one mind too with regard even to the minor points on which we do not agree; "for," says the apostle, "if in anything we" who are of one mind in Christ "be differently minded from each other, God shall reveal even that to us."³

It should be the constant care of those who are called on to watch over the communion of the Christian Church, that none be admitted into it but those who appear to be of one mind, even "the mind of Christ," on the essentials of Christian doctrine and practice, and that none be continued members of that Church who give evidence that on these points they are differently minded from him. Yet great care must be taken not to insist on a greater extent of union of mind than the Master has insisted on. It has been no uncommon thing for men, even good men, in insisting that all applying for admission should be entirely of one mind with them on points on which the will of the Lord is revealed with comparative obscurity, or, it may be, not revealed at all, to exclude men who were obviously of the same mind with their Lord; and to admit men who, though they professed, and it may be truly, that they were of the

¹ Phil. iii. 15.

² Rom. xiv. 5, 10, 15.

³ Phil. iii. 15.

same mind with *them* as to their sectarian peculiarities, made it very evident that they were not of the same mind with *Him* with regard to those saving principles which transform the character. Few things have done greater harm to the Church than this attempt to make the mind of a man, or body of men, rather than the mind which was in Christ, the test of that *one mind* which is the true term of Christian communion.

This is just a peculiar form of the pride and selfishness which are natural to all men, and are not extinguished even in good men. It is the wish to have men of my way of thinking, or of the way of thinking of my denomination, instead of the wish to have both them and myself of the one mind which God gives us, when he by his Spirit puts his laws, the revelation he has made of his mind and will, in the heart, and writes them on the inward parts. It has been beautifully said, "There is naturally, in every man's mind, and most in the shallowest, a kind of fancied infallibility in themselves, which makes them as earnest about agreement in the smallest punctilio as in the highest article of faith. Stronger spirits are usually more patient of contradiction, and less violent, especially in doubtful things; and they that see furthest are least peremptory in their determinations. The apostle to Timothy speaks of 'the spirit of a sound mind.' It is a good sound constitution of mind not to feel every blast either of seeming reason, to be taken with it; or of cross opinion, to be offended at it."¹

This oneness of mind which Christians are to seek in a common conformity of their minds to the mind which is in Christ, should be manifested in their common profession, defence, and practice of the truth which they all know and believe. They are together "to hold fast," and

¹ Leighton.

together to "hold forth," the word of life; to "strive together for the faith of the gospel;" to walk together "in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord, blameless." When, instead of this, professed Christians strive and dispute among themselves; when, instead of appearing to be "perfectly joined in the same mind and in the same judgment," there are "divisions and contentions;" when, instead of "with one mind and one mouth glorifying God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," they, in effect, excommunicate one another, and treat each other as heathen men and publicans: the conversation of Christians is not "honest among the Gentiles." Great discredit has thus been cast on the cause of Christ: great obstacles have been thrown in the way of the conversion of unbelievers, and the name of God and his Son have been blasphemed. Woe, woe has been to the world because of these stumbling-blocks. The controversies among Christians have far more effectually impeded the progress of the gospel than the controversies against Christianity.

When Christians shall more consistently manifest the Christian mind, which already exists in all who deserve the name, in the united exhibition of the truth in their profession and conduct, the word of the Lord will have free course; "it will run, and be" more illustriously "glorified." It will "grow and be multiplied."¹ It was so in the beginning of the gospel. When "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul," and "continued with one accord stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers," they had "favour with all the people;" "the people magnified them;" "multitudes were added to the Church, both of men and women;" "there were daily added to the Church such as should be saved;" "the word of God in-

¹ 2 Thess. iii. 1; Acts xii. 24.

creased, the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.”¹ If Christians had taken but half the pains to show the world how completely they are united in mind and judgment on the great points, that they have taken to make it acquainted with the minute and sometimes impalpable differences which exist among them (the former is fitted to do themselves and their Master honour, and the world good; the latter casts discredit not only on themselves, but on the cause they support, and throws stumbling-blocks in the world’s way); and had they exhibited more of the noble, liberal character which the contemplation of the great points of union is fitted to form, than of the contracted selfish temper which those controversies about minor points engender and nourish, how much higher would both Christianity and Christians have stood in the estimation of mankind at large, and how much nearer would the Christian Church have been to the full possession of her goodly heritage, the peopled earth! Could we indulge, to borrow Robert Hall’s language, the hope “that such a state of things was likely soon to establish itself, we should hail the dawn of a brighter day, and consider it as a nearer approach to the ultimate triumph of the Church, than the annals of time have yet recorded. In the accomplishment of our Lord’s prayer, that all his people may be one, men would behold a demonstration of the divinity of his mission, which the most impious could not resist; and behold in the Church a peaceful haven, inviting them to retire from the tossings and perils of this unquiet ocean, to a sacred enclosure, a sequestered spot, which the storms and tempests of the world were not permitted to invade.”²

¹ Acts iv. 32, 33, ii. 42, 47, vi. 7.

² On terms of communion.—*Works*, ii. 168.

§ 2. *To cultivate and manifest union of feeling.*

The second injunction of the apostle, bearing on this temper and conduct of Christians among themselves, as given by our translators, is, "Have compassion one of another." This version is justly considered by interpreters generally as very unduly limiting the meaning of the apostolic injunction. It confines it to sympathy with fellow-Christians under suffering; whereas the word, even supposing our translation to be substantially right in the meaning given to it, refers to fellow-feeling generally, and includes rejoicing with Christian brethren when they rejoice, as well as weeping with them when they weep. It is plain, however, that this sympathizing temper is one variety, a particular aspect, of the disposition enjoined in the next clause, "Love as brethren;" and though this fact would not be a good reason for giving the word before us an unauthorized or even a very uncommon signification, yet if the proper and common meaning of the word brings out a sense different from that of the succeeding clause, a sense true and important in itself, and peculiarly suitable to the connection in which it stands, there can be no doubt that that sense ought to be preferred.

Now this, we apprehend, is a correct statement of the case. The words literally signify, "Have common feelings." They are the counterpart of the first clause: that says, 'Be of one mind;' this, 'Be of one heart:' that says, 'Think alike;' this, 'Feel alike:' that says, 'Hold the same truth;' this, 'Cherish the same dispositions.' Be all animated by the same affections. To unfold the sentiment a little: 'Cherish every one of you the same reverence and trust in God; the same sense of insignificance as creatures, of demerit as sinners, of obligation as saved sinners; the same love and gratitude to the Saviour; the same dependence on, and fear of

grieving, the Holy Spirit; the same hatred of sin and love of holiness; the same holy contempt of the present evil world; the same moderation in prosperity, and patience in adversity; the same zeal for the divine glory; the same brotherly kindness; the same charity. Let not merely the articles of your faith be the same, but also the features of your character.'

This injunction is very closely connected with that which precedes it. This can be complied with only by those who have obeyed that. We must have the one mind, in order to our having the one heart; and if we really have the one mind, we certainly shall have the one heart. We are "transformed by the renewing of the mind." The doctrine delivered to us, to use the apostle's figure, is the mould in which the new creature is cast;¹ the various principles of the truth as it is in Jesus being as it were the various parts of this mould, each intended and fitted to produce some portion of that image of God in the soul of man of which the Holy Spirit is the wondrous author. His influence and the divine word are equally necessary in their own places to the production of the desired effect. The word will not do it alone, for without his influence it will not be understood and believed; and whatever divine influence might do—and he would be equally unwise and impious who should set limits to Omnipotence—we have no reason to expect that that influence will produce its effects in any other way than that which equally corresponds with the constitution of man, the work of God's hand, and the declarations of Scripture, the word of his mouth, through means of the truth understood and believed.

He, then, who would comply with the apostle's injunction, to have those common feelings which ought to characterize all Christians, must study the Bible, in its meaning and

¹ Rom. xii. 2, vi. 17. *Εἰς ὃν παραδίδηται τύπον διδασκῆς.*

evidence ; he must “let the word of Christ,” which contains his mind, “dwell in him richly ;”¹ and he must at the same time yield up his mind to the influence of the good Spirit, beseeching him to guide him into the truth, to open his understanding to understand the Scriptures, and to open his heart to receive the love of the truth, that he may be saved, by being sanctified by it.

This common mode of feeling ought to be, and indeed where it exists must be, manifested in a corresponding conduct. And when a Christian does habitually exhibit the feelings, disposition, and temper which the truth believed naturally produces, the effect is “a conversation honest,” honourable, “among the Gentiles.” When the piety, and humility, and self-denial, and brotherly kindness, and patience, and public spirit of the gospel are displayed, the men of the world have not only no evil thing to say, but are involuntarily impressed with a reverence both for the man and for his principles. The Christian who acts thus will make it impossible that any man who narrowly observes him should despise either him or his religion ; while, on the other hand, the want of a manifestation of such feelings as a Christian profession gives the world a right to expect in an individual, and still more the manifestation of an opposite kind of feeling, excites suspicion both with regard to the man and his principles, leading to the conclusion either that he is a hypocrite, or, if he be not, that the system that he professes must either be a bad one, as making him a bad man, or at any rate a powerless one, as not having been able to make him a good man.

§ 3. *To cultivate and manifest brotherly kindness.*

The third injunction of the apostle, referring to the temper which Christians should cherish, and the conduct

¹ Col. iii. 16.

they should pursue towards each other, is, "Love as brethren." This injunction may be and has been rendered, 'Be lovers of the brethren;'¹ that is, cherish and display the peculiar affection which Christians ought to bear to Christians. When illustrating the concluding paragraph of the first chapter of this epistle, I had an opportunity of explaining at considerable length the foundation, the nature, and the appropriate manifestations of this principle.²

The order of the apostle's injunctions here deserves well to be noted: "Be of one mind, be of one heart." Hold and profess the same principles, cherish and manifest the same feelings,—in other words, be brethren in Christ, be spiritual brethren,—and then love the brethren: "love as brethren." The foundation of the peculiar love which Christians should cherish to Christians, lies in their common faith and experience as Christians. They love one another "in the truth, for the truth's sake which is in them." Just in the degree that I am a true Christian, do I become capable of loving those who are true Christians; and just in the degree in which they are true Christians, are they, can they be, the objects of my Christian affection.

The idea suggested by the words as rendered by our translators is slightly different, yet well worthy of illustration: "Love as brethren;" that is, either love one another, seeing ye are brethren; or, let your love correspond to the intimacy and permanency of the relation in which ye stand to one another—love as brothers love each other. The first idea I illustrated fully in the discourse already referred to. I shall now attempt briefly to unfold the second. Let your love to your fellow-Christians resemble the love which one brother bears, or ought to bear, to another. True Christian love resembles the love of brothers in various respects, to a few of which I shall shortly advert.

¹ *φιλάδελφοι*, i. e. *brothers*.

² Discourse VI.

They may both be considered as partaking very much of the nature of instincts. It is a part of my constitution as a man to love my brother. Not to love a brother is felt to be something unnatural as well as improper, monstrous as well as wrong. It is a part of my constitution as a new creature to love all my spiritual brethren. If I love my Father, how can I but love his children? He who makes me a member of the family, in so doing gives me the feelings of a child and a brother. Christians are "thus taught of God,"¹ not only in the word, but as it were in the instincts of their new nature, to love one another. "As touching brotherly love," says the Apostle Paul, "ye need not that I write unto you; for even ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another."

The affection of a brother to a brother is sincere and disinterested. When first developed, the habit of duplicity is unknown; and the child, in loving his brother, thinks of nothing less than mercenary advantage: he loves him just because he is his brother. The love of Christians to Christians should be "without dissimulation;" "unfeigned;" "love out of a pure heart."²

The affection of a brother to a brother is warm and tender. When David would express the peculiar ardour of his attachment to Jonathan, he calls him brother: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan;"³ and it is proverbial to say of one friend strongly attached to another, He loves him as if he were his brother. The affection which Christians should bear to Christians should be a strong affection, capable of producing much forbearance, much exertion, much sacrifice, much suffering; a love which many waters cannot quench, which the floods cannot drown.

The love of brothers is forbearing and forgiving. A brother will forbear with and forgive in a brother what he

¹ Θεοδιδάκτοι, 1 Thess. iv. 9.

² 1 Tim. i. 5.

³ 2 Sam. i. 26.

would consider as insufferable and unpardonable in a stranger; and a dutiful, affectionate brother, when differences do arise in the family, throws a veil over them, seeks to keep them within the sacred domestic circle; and even when dissatisfied with a brother, does not think of proclaiming his brother's injustice and faults, and his own injuries, to a stranger. And thus, too, Christians, "with all lowliness and meekness," are to "forbear one another in love," "putting away from them all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice; and being kind one to another, tender-hearted, forbearing one another in love, and forgiving one another, if any have a quarrel against any, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven them;" forgiving "not only seven times, but seventy times seven."¹

The love of a brother to a brother is active. It is chiefly manifested in habitual kindliness of behaviour, and in doing its object good as opportunity occurs. It is love, "not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth." And so it ought to be with the Christian. If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, the Christian brother must not content himself with saying, Depart in peace, may you be warmed and filled; he must give him the things which are necessary for the body. If he have "this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need," he must not "shut up his bowels of compassion from him." If he do, it is a proof that neither the love of God nor of the brethren dwells in him.²

Few things have a greater tendency to recommend Christianity to worldly unbelieving men than the habitual exemplification of this precept; and, on the other hand, few things have done more to injure that religion, and to prevent its progress, than the angry debates, the unseemly animosi-

¹ Eph. iv. 31, 32; Matt. xviii. 22.

² James ii. 15, 16; 1 John iii. 17.

ties, the virulent quarrels, which have so often taken place among its professors. These “cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of,” and “give occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” Proceedings of this kind should lead to great searchings of heart among those who indulge in them : for surely there is reason to fear that they are not really, but only nominally, among the disciples of HIM who says, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another ;” and were their ears but open to discipline, they could scarcely help hearing *Him* indignantly saying to them, “Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say to you ?” “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you.” “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.” “But if ye bite and devour one another,” if ye hate and revile one another, what are ye ? “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him ; but he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness hath blinded his eyes. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever loveth not his brother is not of God. He who loveth his brother, hath passed from death to life. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar ; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ?”¹

Such is a short illustration of those general injunctions contained in the text that refer to the temper which Christians should cherish, and the conduct they should

¹ John xiii. 34, 35 ; Luke vi. 46 ; John xv. 14 ; 1 John ii. 9-11, iii. 10, 14, iv. 20.

exemplify, in reference to one another. They are to hold and profess the same principles; they are to cherish and manifest the same feelings; and they are to cultivate and display that love to one another which naturally grows out of this community of sentiment and feeling,—loving the brethren because they are brethren,—cherishing and manifesting towards them an affection which, in its spontaneousness, and warmth, and steadiness, and active influence, resembles the affection of brother to brother; and they are to do all this, that their conversation may be “honest among the Gentiles,” and that thus they may adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour. I conclude this part of the discourse with the prayer that the good Spirit would write these golden maxims on our hearts, and enable us to exhibit a fair copy of his writing on these fleshly tablets, in our habitual temper and behaviour: “Be of one mind: be of one heart: love as brethren.” And “now may the God of patience and consolation grant us to be like-minded one towards another, according to Christ Jesus, that we may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that there be no division among us, but that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment;”¹ so that the unbelieving world, beholding the effects of our union of mind and heart, in our common hearty efforts in the cause of our common Lord, and in bearing one another’s infirmities, and relieving one another’s wants, may be constrained to say, as of old, “Behold how these Christians love one another!” and that we ourselves, feeling the holy delights of such union and communion, may sing in our hearts, making melody to the Lord: “Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is as the dew of

¹ Rom. xv. 5, 6; 1 Cor. i. 10.

Hermon, the dew that descended on the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore."

II. DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS TO MANKIND GENERALLY.

Let us now consider those injunctions respecting disposition and conduct, which refer not only to the Christian brotherhood, but to all mankind. "Be pitiful, be courteous." Let us attend to these two injunctions in their order.

§ 1. *To "be pitiful."*

The first injunction is, "Be pitiful." The command contained in these words is substantially the same as that of our Lord: "Be ye merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful;" and those of his holy Apostle Paul, "Be kindly affectioned; be kind, tender-hearted; put on bowels of mercies, kindness, meekness, long-suffering."¹

Mercy, properly speaking, is kindness to the miserable, benignity as manifested towards the suffering. To be merciful or pitiful, is to cherish and manifest kind feeling towards those who are in distress. The mercy or pitifulness which is the subject of injunction, is something very different from a naturally kind temper. That is a mere instinctive feeling, and, though amiable and useful, is no proper object of moral approbation. Some very bad men have a large portion of it; while some very good men, if not destitute of it altogether, are by no means distinguished for it. In its movements there is no reference to divine authority; and it is often, as we have just remarked, found in conjunction with principles and habits most decidedly condemned by the divine law.

The mercy here enjoined has no doubt its basis, as all

¹ Luke vi. 36; Rom. xii. 10; Eph. iv. 32.

emotions have, in that part of our physical-mental constitution, which we call the affections. Had we no affections, we could not be subjects of Christian mercy. But Christian mercy is the result of the truth as it is in Jesus, understood and believed, acting on that part of our constitution. It is the feeling which in man, a being capable of affection, is naturally and necessarily developed when he believes that truth, and in the degree in which he believes it. It is the feeling which a man who knows and believes that, in the exercise of sovereign kindness on the part of God, he is, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, who, under the influence of divine pity, took and bore all his responsibilities to divine justice, delivered from evils infinite in their number, immense in their magnitude, eternal in their duration,—evils to which he had rendered himself liable by his unprovoked and innumerable violations of a law most holy, just, and good ;—it is the feeling which such a conscious debtor to divine mercy naturally cherishes towards men who are involved in suffering, especially in that worst species of suffering from which he, through divine goodness and pity, has obtained security. This is a feeling which can be awakened in the human heart only by the Divine Spirit, leading the individual to believe the great love wherewith God hath loved us, and which he has commended to us, in not sparing his Son for our sakes, and in sparing and blessing us for his sake. Till there is this faith, there cannot be this feeling ; and where this feeling is not, the very soul of Christian mercy is absent.

The essence of the disposition required is kind feeling towards the miserable, and its natural manifestation is the use of the means in our power to prevent and to relieve misery. It is the direct opposite, not merely of cruelty, but of insensibility ; a compassionate tenderness of heart, which makes us weep with them who weep, or who,

though they do not weep, being ignorant of or insensible to their wretchedness, have on that ground the greater cause to weep.

This Christian pity has a wide range. It looks at man in both the constituent parts of his nature. It regards both the souls and the bodies of men. It is drawn out both by their spiritual and their bodily miseries; by evils feared as well as felt; by evils not feared, but sure to be felt if not feared; by the evils of eternity as well as of time. It ought to be exercised to all men who are in misery, though connected with us by no tie but that of a common nature; and the limits of its practical manifestation are to be prescribed by our means of preventing and relieving misery, and a wise judgment as to how those means can be most effectually employed in gaining the end in view—the prevention, the relief, the extinction of suffering.

The regard which Christian pity shows in reference to the miseries of man, as a being connected with God and destined to immortality, is one of the features by which it is chiefly distinguished from that instinctive kindness to which I have been adverting. The good-natured, generous man of the world, pities and relieves the temporal wants and miseries of his fellow-men; but he thinks not of their spiritual state, their everlasting prospects. He has a tender sympathy, he exerts a generous activity, in reference to disease and destitution, and such varieties of ignorance and vice as produce misery and disorder to the individual and society; but he has no pity for a soul dead in sin, far from God, destitute of hope, doomed to destruction. Indeed, this could not reasonably be expected. How should he feel for others in reference to such subjects, who has in that respect no feeling for himself? The foundation of such feelings is wanting in him, in a just abiding conviction of the realities of the unseen and eternal world. Though

professing, as many such persons do, to hold the views Scripture presents on these subjects, there does appear a monstrous absurdity in being so exceedingly concerned about the alleviation or removal of the sufferings of a few short years, and altogether careless about the prevention of the intolerable miseries of eternity. The pitifulness which the apostle enjoins is not thus inconsistent. The Christian looks on mankind chiefly in their relation to God and eternity. In his estimation, he is poor who is not rich towards God; he is blind who is ignorant of the way of salvation; he is naked who is destitute of the robe of righteousness; he is diseased who is covered with the leprosy of sin. No loss appears to him worthy of being compared with the loss of the soul; no death deserving the name but the second death; no agonies like the pangs of remorse and the torments of hell.

In this respect, Christian pitifulness resembles the divine mercy, in the faith of which it originates. The God whose nature as well as name is love, pities all the miseries of man; but it is immortal man, the sinner, who is emphatically the object of divine mercy. He thought of us in our low estate of guilt, and condemnation, and depravity, for "his mercy endureth for ever." It stretches onwards to eternity, and manifests its greatness in delivering from "the lowest hell." In like manner, the Christian should and will regard with peculiar pity his fellow-men, viewed as immortal beings labouring under spiritual disease, in danger of eternal death.

It has been justly said, "The sins of men, and the danger of their everlasting ruin by them, will awaken a lively concern and grief in every Christian mind," in every heart in which the love of God shed abroad by the Holy Ghost has produced genuine love to man. "He has the truest and justest compassion for his neighbour, who cannot with-

out a tender sorrow see him provoking the great God to jealousy, throwing away his immortal soul, living under the power of a fell mortal distemper, and laying up in store for a dreadful account, 'heaping up wrath for the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.' Whoever believes that religion is a reality, must be more deeply, if not more sensibly, affected with such a melancholy sight, than with seeing the bodily wants or consuming diseases of men, or with hearing their most dismal groans and mournful complaints occasioned by worldly loss or corporeal suffering; for he knows the soul is more valuable than the body, hell is worse than death, and time is shorter than eternity." In a world full of suffering, "the transgressor" is the fittest object of the deepest commiseration. "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved;" "Rivers of water,"—the tears of pity for self-destroying man, as well as of regret for injury done to the holy character and law of God,—“Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because the wicked keep not thy law.”¹

But while chiefly affected by the miseries of men as sinners, by their ignorance, and error, and guilt, and obduracy, and depravity, in their endlessly varied forms, and by the fearful, unavoidable, remediless state of wretchedness which awaits impenitent men in the future world, the pitifulness of the Christian is drawn forth by misery of every kind, by suffering in every form.

The Christian, when he acts like himself, is far from being insensible to those calamities and wants of man which are limited to the present state. He cherishes a tender sympathy with "all the evils to which men are exposed in their bodies, in their minds, in their connection with each other, in their external circumstances, from whatever cause they may originate,—whether from the

¹ Ps. cxix. 158, 136.

immediate visitation of God, from the injustice and cruelty of their fellow-men, or from their own folly and crime.”¹ He pities suffering in every form. Wherever he sees misery, he feels compassion. Like Job, he “weeps for all who are in trouble, and his soul is grieved for the poor.”

But the apostolic injunction looks to the appropriate manifestation of this feeling, as well as to its existence. When he says, “Be pitiful,” he means, Show by your conduct that you are pitiful. Christian pity is essentially an operative principle. It is not “a well shut up, a fountain sealed;” it is a copious source of streams of blessing.

Pity for the spiritual miseries of men must be manifested in appropriate, wise, vigorous, persevering endeavours for relief. We must not stand by the self-erected pile on which the sinner is about to offer himself in sacrifice to the powers of evil, bemoaning his folly. We must “pull him out of the fire.” It were well if Christians would ponder more deeply those words of awful import: “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn to death, and those that are ready to be slain; if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth he not know it? and shall he not render to every man according to his works?”² And those words, too, so full of encouragement: “He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

Every Christian is bound personally to perform such acts of mercy within his own sphere of activity, and by his influence and property to give support to all scriptural plans for alleviating and removing the spiritual miseries of men both at home and abroad. Our pity should take the form of constant persevering prayer, for the work is more God’s than man’s; but it should take the form, too, of

¹ Wardlaw.

² Prov. xxiv. 11, 12.

cheerful, liberal, regular contribution, and personal exertion, for the work is man's work as well as God's; and God's work by man, God being the primary agent, man the active instrument. That man surely has no bowels of compassion for perishing men, no Christian pitifulness, who can see thousands of them falling over the precipice into perdition, without shedding a tear over their hopeless misery, and thousands more rushing onwards towards that precipice, without attempting to arrest their course. Were Christians as pitiful as they should be, as they might reasonably be expected to be, there would be no want of Christian missionaries either for home or foreign service, and no want of funds for their support.

Pity for the bodily wants and miseries of men must also be manifested in appropriate, wise, vigorous, persevering endeavours for their relief. The Christian's sympathy must not remain hidden in his bosom, a source merely of painful or pleasant excitement to himself. It must not expend itself in words of commiseration. It must take the form of sacrifice and exertion. He must not content himself with saying to the houseless, ill-clad, shivering object of his compassion, "Be ye warmed and filled;" he must, if it be in his power, give him "the things which are needful for the body." This is the pity which characterized the patriarch Job: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came on me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out."¹ This is the pity of which the divine approbation is so strikingly declared

¹ Job xxix. 11-16.

by the prophet Isaiah. The Lord promises to "guide continually," and to bless abundantly, the man who "deals his bread to the hungry, and brings the poor who are cast out to his house; who, when he sees the naked, covers them, and hides not himself from his own flesh: who draws out his soul to the hungry, and satisfies the afflicted soul."¹ And this is the pity which will meet with the solemn approval of the Supreme Judge, when from his great white throne in the heavens he pronounces the sentences which are to fix the eternal state of men and angels: "Then shall the King say to them on the right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."²

It is thus only that Christian pitifulness can have that character which our Lord requires when he says, "Be ye merciful, as your Father in heaven is merciful," for His pity was active pity. "For the great love wherewith he loved" miserable men, he "spared not his own Son," devoted him for us as a victim, gives him to us as a Saviour, and gives us all things with him, "blessing us in him with all heavenly and spiritual blessings." It is thus only that Christian pity can form a part of that resemblance to our Lord in which true Christian holiness consists. HE, as well as his divine Father, not only pitied, but saved; and saved at what an expenditure of sacrifice, and toil, and suffering! "Though in the form of God, he humbled himself," laid aside the glories of that form, took on him the nature of a man, the form of a servant, the likeness of a sinner, be-

¹ Isa. lviii. 7, 10.

² Matt. xxv. 34-36.

coming "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." With what indefatigable activity, with what disinterested self-denial, with what patient endurance, did he seek to relieve the wants, to remove the miseries of men ! It was his meat to do the benignant will of his Father in heaven, in showing mercy to the miserable. "He went about doing good." This was his "Father's business," about which he was always to be found engaged. He embraced every opportunity of manifesting his pity, showing mercy ; and not contented with answering applications made to him, he often went in quest of objects of compassion, to comfort and relieve them. In their measure Christians must thus be pitiful ; for it is only thus that they can have evidence that the mind which was in Christ is in them, and that they are HIS, having his Spirit dwelling in them.

There are two principles on this subject which must be held with equal firmness. The one is, that external acts of beneficence in supplying want and relieving distress, though in themselves good and useful, if disjoined from the faith of the gospel, and the pity which it uniformly excites, and which it alone can excite, are no evidences of Christian character, and cannot be accepted of God as a part of the living sacrifice, with which, with which alone, for Christ's sake, he is well pleased. The other is, that wherever the principle of Christian pity exists, it will manifest itself by producing its appropriate effects. Where the ability and opportunity to do good exist, and yet no good is done, professions of sympathy with human misery, however fervent, must be hypocritical ; and however they may impose on man, which they do to a far less extent than they who deal in them seem to suppose, must be regarded with abhorrence by him who "desireth truth in the inward part."

It scarcely needs to be remarked, that the form and

degree of the manifestation of that Christian temper which is enjoined in the text, must depend on the circumstances in which the individual who cherishes it is placed. A kind look, a soothing word, a compassionate tear, "a cup of cold water," are sometimes both more genuine expressions of Christian pity, and more effectual means of gaining its object, the alleviation of suffering, than the most costly pecuniary offerings.

This pitiful, compassionate disposition is not to be limited to any particular class of sufferers. It is not to be confined to relations or friends, to fellow-Christians or fellow-citizens. Wherever there is misery, there should be commiseration; and wherever there is the power to relieve, there should be relief. "Christian pity is a prime lineament of the image of God; and the more absolute and disengaged it is in regard to those towards whom it acts, the more is it like unto God; looking upon misery as a sufficient incentive of pity and mercy, without the ingredient of any other consideration. It is merely a vulgar piece of goodness to be helpful and bountiful to friends, or to such as are within appearance of requital. It is a trading commerce that; but pity and bounty which need no inducements but the meeting a fit object to work upon, where it can expect nothing save only the privilege of doing good, which is in itself so sweet, is Godlike indeed,—like HIM, who is rich in bounty, without any necessity, yea, or possibility of return from us; for we have neither anything to confer upon him, nor hath he need of receiving anything, who is the spring of goodness and of being."¹

At the same time, it must not be forgotten, that while Christian pity leads those under its influence to compassionate and relieve all the indigent and wretched as they have opportunity, it impels them with peculiar force to

¹ Leighton.

relieve the wants of those with whom they are most intimately connected. The man who speculates and talks of universal philanthropy, and even makes exertions in behalf of a benevolent object, if it be but on a sufficiently magnificent scale, while, in the circle of his family or neighbourhood, he does little or nothing to relieve suffering and supply want, may without breach of charity be set down as a pretender to a character that does not belong to him; and the consistency of his Christian profession may well be questioned, whatever we may think of its sincerity, who, while manifesting zeal for diminishing the sufferings and promoting the improvement of the inhabitants of distant lands, is inattentive to the distress and destitution with which he is surrounded; who, while he professes to feel for Negroes and Tartars, Turks and Jews, seems to have no bowels of compassion for his countrymen who are destitute of the necessaries of life, or are perishing for lack of knowledge.

Such, then, is the Christian pitifulness which the apostle enjoins as a part of "a conversation honest among the Gentiles;" a means of constraining those who "spoke evil of them" ignorantly and falsely, "as of evil-doers," to form a more favourable opinion both of them and of their religion; a means of "putting to silence the ignorance of such foolish men," of winning those without the word who will not obey the word, of making those ashamed who falsely accused their good conversation in Christ.

It requires but little reflection to perceive, that the cultivation and display of this amiable temper are well fitted to gain these ends. The efforts of Christian piety, in the way of attempts to relieve the spiritual wants of mankind, not unfrequently excite the resentment of those who are their immediate objects, and draw forth the ridicule of ungodly observers. Yet even these, when

obviously springing from genuine, though, in the estimation of unconverted men, misguided benevolence, produce on the whole a favourable impression both of their authors and of their religion; while, on the other hand, apathy and inaction on the part of professed Christians in reference to the removal of evils, which, if there be any truth in the Bible, are the greatest of all man's miseries, necessarily awaken in the mind of reflecting infidels doubts with regard to their sincerity, and give plausibility to the suggestion that Christianity does not possess the power which it lays claim to, as a transformer of the character and director of the conduct.

Few things are more fitted to soften prejudices against, and produce a disposition fairly and favourably to consider the claims of, Christianity, than Christian individuals and societies cheerfully and liberally and laboriously supporting every probable scheme that is brought forward for lessening the mass of human suffering, in the form of poverty and disease, and for increasing the sum of human health and enjoyment. These are subjects in which men of the world can take an interest, and of which they can form a just judgment. Of the excellence of peculiar doctrines of Christianity, of the internal holiness which the faith of these doctrines is intended to produce, and actually does produce, they can form no just estimate, and "they speak evil of things which they know not." But to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to console the distressed, to provide means of recovery for the bodily or mentally diseased, appear to them "things good and profitable unto men;" and when they perceive Christians discovering a readiness to make sacrifices, to expend time and property and labour to gain such objects, in a degree far superior to that of men not possessed of Christian principles, the natural effect is, to lead them to inquire into the cause of

the difference ; and finding, what Christians should never be backward to avow, that such exertions are the result of their peculiar views and feelings as Christians, their prejudices are softened, and they are furnished with a motive to examine into what these principles are, and are placed in more favourable circumstances for entering on such an examination, and conducting it to a desirable issue. This consideration of itself ought to be felt by every Christian as a powerful motive to comply with the injunction in the text, "Be pitiful."

I conclude this division of the discourse by two quotations : the one the words of the Apostle Paul, the other the words of our Lord Jesus : the first placing in a strong light the peculiar reasons which urge Christians to be pitiful and kind ; the second, the absolutely monstrous character of the opposite disposition, in all who live under such a dispensation of mercy as is revealed in the word of the truth of the gospel : "Be gentle, showing all meekness unto all men : for we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour ; that being justified by grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying : and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, in order that they who have believed in God may be careful to maintain good works : " among the rest, the works of Christian mercy. "These things are good and profitable unto men." ¹

¹ Tit. iii. 2-8.

So much for the words of the holy apostle. Now for the words of his and our Lord: "Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him."¹ Thus, he that shows no mercy shall have judgment without mercy.

How powerful, how persuasive, are these motives! Let us lay open our hearts to their influence. Let us be pitiful; pitiful to our relations, to our neighbours, to strangers, to enemies, to our fellow-Christians, our fellow-citizens, our

¹ Matt. xviii. 23-34.

fellow-men : pitiful to their bodies, pitiful to their minds, pitiful to their souls ; pitiful in reference to the interests of time ; above all, pitiful in reference to the interests of eternity. Let us “be merciful, as our Father who is in heaven is merciful.”

§ 2. *To “be courteous.”*

The second injunction in reference to the Christian's behaviour to mankind at large, “Be courteous,” comes now to be considered. This injunction is certainly not “the first and great commandment” of the Christian law. It is not even one of “the weightier matters of that law.” But it is a part of that law ; and the fact that it is so, is an illustration of the divine statement, that that law is exceeding broad. It may be considered as included in the second commandment of that law which is like the first : “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” It is, indeed, an injunction of one of the minor manifestations of that love which is “the fulfilling of the law.” It belongs to that class of commandments of which our Lord says, that he who breaks them, and teaches men so, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven ; while he who does and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

That it forms, then, a proper subject of occasional illustration and enforcement by the Christian minister, cannot be doubted by any one who believes that it is the Christian pastor's duty to teach those under his care “to observe *all* things whatsoever the Master has commanded ;” and to “stir up” the purest-minded of them, “by way of remembrance, that they may be mindful of the commandments of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour :” I say a proper subject of *occasional* illustration ; for he would ill deserve the appellation of a good minister of Jesus Christ, who should give to such topics as this the principal, or even a

very prominent, place in his public or private teaching. "The grace of God," and the godliness, righteousness, and sobriety which it alone can effectually teach, should form the staple matter of our ministry. Pulpit instruction should consist habitually of the exposition of the doctrines and the inculcation of the duties, the belief and practice of which are essential to the formation of the Christian character and the realization of the Christian hope. What we are chiefly to testify is, "the gospel of the grace of God;" "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." But we must never forget that "every word of God is pure;" "all Scripture is profitable;" and he who would be "perfect, thoroughly furnished to every good work," must consider with attention and receive with meekness "every word which has proceeded out of the mouth of God." The Christian minister is not to shun to declare to his people "all the counsel of God:" he is not to "keep back anything which may be profitable unto them." Whatever has appeared to God worthy of suggestion by his Spirit, and inscription by an apostle in that book which is intended to be the permanent revelation of his mind and will, and the permanent guide of our faith and conduct, must be deserving of our considerate attention.¹

The original term² which appears in the received text is capable of, and has received, different renderings. By our translators it is rendered courteous; by others not inferior to them in learning and judgment, it has been translated friendly-minded, obliging. This, too, is one of the comparatively few places where there is some uncertainty as to what is the genuine reading. In most of the critical editions of the New Testament, instead of the word which signifies courteous or friendly-minded, we have a word which signifies humble or modest.³ As there is thus some

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17; Acts xx. 20, 27.

² φιλόφρωνις.

³ ταπεινόφρωνις.

uncertainty as to the precise idea which the inspired writer expresses here, and as courtesy and friendliness and humility are all of them tempers which, according to the Christian law, Christians should cherish and exercise in reference to all mankind, and the display of which is well fitted to secure the object which the apostle has in view,—the protection of Christianity from the misapprehensions and misrepresentations of an unbelieving world, and the recommending of it to their respectful notice and favourable consideration,—instead of attempting to fix which of these three closely connected senses is the meaning of the apostle, I shall shortly advert to them all, as any of them *may* be, as one of them *must* be, his meaning.

I remark, then, in the first place, that the apostle may be considered as here enjoining courtesy. The English words courtesy and courteousness are derived from the term court, and are used in their primitive sense to describe that polish and refinement of manners which prevail in the palaces of princes, and distinguish the intercourse of the great, just as that rudeness of manner which is opposed to these is termed rusticity,—a word which primarily denotes the characteristic manner of the inhabitants of the rural districts, who for the most part belong to the humbler and less educated part of the community, and whose means of intercourse even with each other, and still more with the polished portion of society, are necessarily circumscribed. This is the origin of the term, though there is abundant foundation for the remark of the poet—

“ Courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds,
With smoky rafters, than in tapestry halls
And courts of princes, where at first ’twas nam’d,
And yet is most pretended.”¹

¹ Milton, *Comus*.

I do not know that the subject of the apostle's injunction, in this view of it, can be better described than as a disposition, with its appropriate manifestations, to treat with becoming respect all with whom we are brought in connection, either occasionally or permanently, in the ordinary intercourse of social life ; and to avoid everything in manner, language, and conduct, which may unnecessarily wound their feelings or interfere with their enjoyment. It is, indeed, nothing else than enlightened benevolence manifesting itself in reference to little things. It supposes a capacity of entering into the feelings of others, and judging rightly as to what would gratify and what would wound their feelings ; and a disposition to act towards them on the principle, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."¹ As no man would be unjust or cruel, so few would be discourteous, if they habitually acted according to this golden rule.

Courtesy in general is opposed both to unsociableness and moroseness, the indisposition to mingle with our fellow-men, and the disposition, when we mingle with them, to make them uncomfortable. The courteous man finds a pleasure in the society of his fellow-men ; and when in their society, discovers his satisfaction by endeavouring to make all around him happy. The particular form which courtesy assumes, depends on the relation the courteous person stands to the object of his courtesy. If he is his superior, he regards and treats him with deference and respect ; avoiding, on the one hand, all impertinence and presumption, and uncalled-for obtrusive display of independence, and, on the other, all man-worship, all cringing obsequiousness. If he is his inferior, he treats him with condescension and civility, like one who, in by far the most important points of view, stands on a level with himself ; not coldly indifferent to nor

¹ Matt. vii. 12.

cruelly negligent of his feelings, but disposed to respect his rights and to promote his happiness. If he is his equal, he treats him with affability; he is not morose, but conciliatory, —not sullen, but cheerful. He is attentive; ready to give, ready to receive, the tokens of mutual respect. He is disposed to please and to be pleased, not fretful or quarrelsome or contemptuous, ever ready to put the best construction on words and actions; indisposed to take, and careful not to give, offence.

The courtesy which the apostle enjoins in the text must not be confounded with that artificial polish of manners which marks the higher classes of society. Christian courtesy may be combined with this artificial politeness; and the combination is beautiful, a gem richly set, “apples of gold in pictures of silver,” a fair body with a fairer soul; but they are often to be found separate. Many who are distinguished by this artificial politeness are entire strangers to Christian courtesy; and many are habitually and thoroughly courteous who have had no opportunity of acquiring even the first elements of this artificial politeness. In very many cases artificial politeness is systematic hypocrisy: it is a mask concealing truth and exhibiting falsehood; the not appearing to be what we are, or the appearing to be what we are not. Sentiments and feelings are often strongly expressed, when they exist only in a very inferior degree, or, it may be, where they do not exist at all, or where sentiments and feelings of a directly opposite kind exist. Under a pretence of studying the feelings of others, the most malignant selfishness often seeks gratification: under the guise of the most courteous demeanour and language, the most unkind and contemptuous feelings are frequently cherished and expressed; and he who is studiously courteous to certain individuals and classes, according to the laws and usages of a con-

ventional politeness, may be, and not uncommonly is, characterized by an utter disregard, an entire want of respect, for the feelings of other individuals and classes.

Christian courtesy, like all Christian social virtues, originates in that love of man which flows from the love of God, and grows out of the knowledge and belief of the truth. The Christian regards all men as the children of God; endowed with reason, destined to immortality, capable of being, through the atoning blood and sanctifying Spirit of Jesus Christ, made fit for the most intimate fellowship with God in knowledge, and holiness, and blessedness. He regards the arrangements of society as the result of divine appointment and agency; and hence learns that respect for all men, that honour for all in authority, and that cordial sympathy with all in the humbler stations of society, which naturally express themselves in a courteous demeanour.¹

While there may be conventional politeness where there is no true courtesy, and true courtesy where there is little conventional politeness, yet it deserves to be remarked, that, so far as the established forms of intercourse in society are innocent, consistent with truth and integrity, Christian courtesy will induce its possessor to conform to them. Wherever these forms imply falsehood, a higher law than that of custom or fashion, the law of God, forbids compliance. He must not use "flattering words:" he must not express sentiments which he does not believe, nor simulate affections which he does not feel; but that eccentricity which leads a man to disregard innocent social usages may commonly be traced to pride and selfishness, principles the

¹ "This is affability of the heart as well as of the demeanour: this is Christian civility; as many degrees above modish civility as to serve another effectually is better than to be *his most obedient servant*."—JORTIN.

very reverse of those from which true Christian courtesy springs.

This courtesy should be commensurate with our social relations. We should be courteous to all. It should regulate the intercourse of kindred: no intimacy of relation can be sustained as a reason for dispensing with it. Husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, ought to treat one another courteously, with respect as well as with kindness. This greatly adds to the order and happiness of a family, and serves in some measure as a security for the performance of the higher duties. The manner in which the apostle enjoins the duty on servants is very striking: "Let as many servants as be under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honour; and they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are Christian brethren."¹ It should be manifested in the Church of God. The pastors and elders should conduct themselves courteously to the humbler members of the flock; and the members of the congregation should, in their turn, cherish respectful sentiments, and express them in their language and conduct, towards those that are over them in the Lord. This courtesy should also mark the conduct of the Christian in all his intercourse with the world. He is to show all courtesy, as well as "all meekness, to all men." But there is the less necessity for my dwelling on this part of the subject, that I have already had an opportunity of going somewhat into detail in the illustration of it, when explaining the injunction, "Honour all men."

It may be proper to notice here that Christian courtesy, as it does not require, nor indeed permit, the use of language or the performance of acts inconsistent with truth and integrity; so neither does it forbid the statement of sentiments and the performance of actions which duty

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.

requires, however unpleasant they may be to the persons more immediately concerned, though it secures that such sentiments shall be stated and such actions performed in such a way as shall give no needless offence. "Neither is it to be supposed," to use the words of a living author, "that courtesy to others implies a forgetfulness of what we owe to ourselves, or a just sense of what others owe to us. Our Lord, who was the perfect example of courtesy, as of every other excellence, more than once evaded interrogatories which were intended to entrap him; and Paul, at Philippi, asserted his political rights as a Roman citizen, by refusing liberty when offered, unless granted in the manner in which it became him to receive it."

The illustration of Christian courteousness by Archbishop Leighton well deserves quotation: "This courteousness which the apostle recommends is not satisfied with what goes no deeper than words and gestures. That is sometimes the upper garment of malice, saluting him aloud in the morning whom they are undermining all the day; and sometimes, though more innocent, it may be troublesome, merely by the vain affectation and excess of it; and even this becomes not a wise man, much less a Christian: an over-studying or acting of this is a token of emptiness, and is below a solid mind. Nor is it that graver and wiser way of external plausible deportment which fully answers this word. That is the outer half indeed; but the thing itself is a radical sweetness in the temper of the mind that spreads itself into a man's words and actions, and this not merely natural (a gentle, kind disposition, which is indeed a natural advantage which some have), but spiritual, from a new nature descended from heaven; and so in its original nature it far excels the other, supplies it where it is not, and doth not only increase it where it is, but elevates it above itself, renews it, and sets a more excellent stamp upon it."

To the cultivation of this courtesy Christians are urged by most powerful motives. It is explicitly enjoined by the highest authority. He who commands us to be holy, commands us to be courteous. It is one way of fulfilling the great law of love, and it is among "the things which are honest, honourable, lovely, and of good report," which Christians are called to "think on," in order to their practising them. It deserves notice, that we find the law of God under the former dispensation breathing the same spirit. What are the commands, "When thou shalt lend thy brother anything, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge;" "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man: I am the Lord. Thou shalt not curse the deaf; Thou shalt not put a stumbling-block before the blind;"—what are all these precepts, inculcating, as they do, regard to the feelings and respect for the persons and situations of others, but instances of the endless variety of particular injunctions that are all bound up in the one brief law, "Be courteous?"

Besides, courteousness is taught and enforced not only by precept, but by example. He who is our great Exemplar has set us an example of courtesy. There was nothing stern or boisterous in his language and demeanour. He did not "strive or cry." Little incidents mark character. "He," we are told, "prayed," that is, courteously requested, the crew of a boat in which he sat, "to put a little away from the land;" and there is a dignified courteousness as well as an unparalleled meekness in his behaviour to his enemies: "Friend," said he to Judas, "wherefore art thou come?" And to those who smote him on the cheek he said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou me?" It deserves notice, too, that he mildly reproved, for want of courtesy, Simon the Pharisee, who entertained him at dinner: "Thou gavest

me no water to wash my feet; thou gavest me no kiss; mine head with oil thou didst not anoint."

Some of the most distinguished of the saints whose lives are recorded in Scripture, were distinguished for their courtesy. We shall select an example from each of the volumes of inspired truth. First in this class stands Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God. What beautiful pictures of true politeness are presented to us in the following incidents of his history! "And the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent-door in the heat of the day; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him: and when he saw them, he ran to meet them from the tent-door, and bowed himself toward the ground, and said, My lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant. Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree: and I will fetch a morsel of bread, and comfort ye your hearts; after that ye shall pass on: for therefore are ye come to your servant. And they said, So do as thou hast said. And Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth. And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a calf tender and good, and gave it unto a young man: and he hasted to dress it. And he took butter and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree, and they did eat."¹

The next incident is still more striking and affecting: "And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah. And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to

¹ Gen. xviii. 1-8.

weep for her. And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying, I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight. And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him, Hear us, my lord: Thou art a mighty prince among us; in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead: none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead. And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth. And he communed with them, saying, If it be your mind that I should bury my dead out of my sight, hear me, and entreat for me to Ephron, the son of Zohar, that he may give me the cave of Machpelah, which he hath, which is in the end of his field: for as much money as it is worth he shall give it me, for a possession of a burying-place amongst you. And Ephron dwelt among the children of Heth. And Ephron the Hittite answered Abraham in the audience of the children of Heth, even of all that went in at the gate of his city, saying, Nay, my lord, hear me: The field give I thee, and the cave that is therein, I give it thee; in the presence of the sons of my people give I it thee: bury thy dead. And Abraham bowed down himself before all the people of the land. And he spake unto Ephron, in the audience of the people of the land, saying, But if thou wilt give it, I pray thee, hear me: I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and I will bury my dead there. And Ephron answered Abraham, saying unto him, My lord, hearken unto me: The land is worth four hundred shekels of silver; what is that betwixt me and thee? bury therefore thy dead. And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver, which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money

with the merchant. And the field of Ephron, which was in Machpelah, which was before Mamre, the field, and the cave which was therein, and all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about, were made sure unto Abraham for a possession, in the presence of the children of Heth, before all that went in at the gate of the city.”¹

Our other example is the Apostle Paul; the most extraordinary merely human personage the New Testament makes us acquainted with. “Paul,” it has been well said, “was the most distinguished for zeal as an apostle, the most remarkable for courtesy as a man. His language in some of his letters, and his conduct on certain occasions, are a perfect model of polite and courteous phraseology, of bland and beautiful address.” Take, as a specimen, his address to Felix, and view in contrast with it the fulsome flattery of Tertullus the orator: “And after five days, Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, we accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: who also hath gone about to profane the temple; whom we took, and would have judged according to our law: but the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest

¹ Gen. xxiii. 1-18.

take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him. And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so. Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: because that thou mayest understand that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me. But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets; and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.”¹

Even still more striking is the conversation between Paul and the Roman judge and king Agrippa. How far does the prisoner exceed the judge in dignified courtesy! “And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me

¹ Acts xxiv. 1-16.

this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds."¹

What a beautiful instance of courteousness have we in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where, after having expressed a wish to go to Rome, that he might impart to the Christians there "some spiritual gift;" lest their feelings should be hurt, as if he thought all the advantage was to be on their side, he adds, "that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me!" And what a delicate touch of Christian courtesy, as well as kindness, is to be found in the way in which he sends his affectionate remembrance to the mother of Rufus, at the 13th verse of the sixteenth chapter of that epistle: "His mother and mine!"

The Epistle to Philemon stands, in relation to this subject, as a composition, unrivalled and alone, both for its sentiments and language. Read it carefully, and say if the apostle does not appear a perfect master of the trains of thought and forms of expression most indicative of eminence in this Christian grace of courtesy.

Few things tend more to make a Christian conversation "honest," that is, honourable, "among unbelievers," than the culture and display of courtesy; while its absence, and still more the presence of opposite tempers and habits, gives occasion to those who are seeking occasion, both to think and speak unfavourably of Christianity and of Christians. The want of courtesy has often more than neutralized the influence of great talents and great excellence; and the possession of it has rendered men of but moderate talents or endowments greatly useful in promoting the Christian cause. It is very justly remarked by a Christian moralist: "If religious but coarsely-mannered persons, however safe they may be as to their own state,

¹ Acts xxvi. 24-29.

could be made aware how much injury their want of prudence and delicacy is doing to the minds of the polished and discriminating, who, though they may admire Christianity in the abstract, do not love it so cordially as to bear with the grossness of some of its professors, nor understand it so intimately as to distinguish between what is essential and what is extrinsic; if they could conceive what mischief they do to religion by the associations which they lead the refined to combine with it, so as to lead them inseparably to connect piety with vulgarity, they would endeavour to correct their own taste, from the virtuous fear of shocking that of others.”¹ It is greatly to be deprecated, thus to throw additional obstacles in the way of Christianity getting justice done to it, and of unbelievers becoming Christians. It is treating it unjustly, and then unkindly. Let no one then say of courtesy, it is a small matter thus to make so much of. It is a small matter compared with righteousness, mercy, temperance, and fidelity; but it is one of the matters of the Christian law; and let us remember who it is who says, “These things ye ought to do, and not to leave the others undone.”²

¹ Hannah More.

² What a beautiful picture of courtesy is given in Matthew Henry’s Life of his father! “It may not be improper to observe, what was obvious as well as amiable to all who conversed with him,—that he had the most sweet and obliging air of courtesy and civility that could be; which some attributed in part to his early education at court. His mien and carriage were always so very decent and respectful, that they could not but win the hearts of all he had to do with. Never was any man further from that rudeness and moroseness which some scholars, and too many that profess religion, either wilfully affect or carelessly allow themselves in, sometimes to the reproach of their profession. It is one of the laws of our holy religion, exemplified in the conversation of this good man, to ‘honour all men.’ Sanctified civility is a great ornament to Christianity. It was a saying he often used, ‘Religion doth not destroy good manners;’ and yet he was very far from anything like vanity in apparel or formality of compliment in address: but his conver-

Having gone so fully into the illustration and enforcement of Christian courtesy, I must confine myself to a very few observations on the two other views which may be taken of the inspired injunction now before us.

I observed in the second place, that it may be considered as requiring a friendly or obliging temper or behaviour. This, rather than "courtesy" strictly so called, is considered by many as the import of the original term. Christians should cherish and manifest a kind and obliging disposition to all. They are not only to be pitiful to sufferers, but kind and obliging to all; disposed to do good to *all* as they have opportunity. This Christian temper and habit is opposed to that disposition of which Nabal¹ is the type, which prevents a man almost from speaking peaceably to his neighbour. There are men who can scarcely speak without saying, who can scarcely act without doing, something disobliging and displeasing to their fellow-men, "so churlish is their nature."

But it is opposed not only to this most unlovely temper, but also to that retiredness of mind and temper which leads a man to shut himself up in himself, and his own immediate interests. Such a man may be peaceable and harmless, but he is not obliging and useful. He will neither say nor do an unkind or injurious thing, but the law of kindness is not on his lips; and his hand, though not wielding the weapons of warfare against his neighbour, is not employed in promoting his happiness. The Christian,

sation was all natural and easy to himself and others, and nothing appeared in him which even a severe critic could justly call affected. This temper of his tended very much to the adorning of the doctrine of God our Saviour; and the general transcript of so excellent a copy would do much toward the healing of those wounds which religion hath received in the house of her friends."—*Account of the Life and Death of Mr Philip Henry*, p. 4. London, 1712.

¹ 1 Sam. xxv. 17.

in reference to all with whom he comes in contact, should discover a disposition to oblige and serve them.

This greatly tends to soften men's prejudices against religion, while an opposite temper and behaviour on the part of professors are as powerfully calculated to harden their prejudices, and to give occasion to the adversaries to reproach Christians, and blaspheme Christianity and its Author.

I observed in the third place, that the apostle may be considered as enjoining here humility or modesty. In many of the most ancient manuscripts, the reading is, "Be humble." Christians are not to think of themselves "highly," but "soberly." If they are Christians, they must believe their insignificance as creatures, and their demerit as sinners. They must believe that they are in their natural state thoroughly depraved; deeply, inexcusably guilty; righteously condemned; hopelessly wretched; and that if their state is altered, if their characters are transformed, if their prospects are improved, it is all owing to sovereign divine kindness operating through the mediation of Jesus Christ, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit. The native tendency of such views is to make a man humble and lowly in spirit; to make him feel that pride was not made for him. This should be the habitual temper of the Christian, and should give a decided character to his habitual demeanour and behaviour. He should be "clothed with humility:" "in lowliness of mind esteeming others better than himself."¹

He should carefully avoid all kinds of pride as absurd and criminal, but especially spiritual pride. His conduct should never be such as to say to those about him, "Stand by thyself; come not near to me, I am holier than thou." He must not "mind high things;" he must "condescend

¹ 1 Pet. v. 5; Phil. ii. 3.

to men of low estate;" he must not "be wise in his own conceit."¹

The cultivation and display of humility are recommended by very numerous and powerful motives. It is the most reasonable of all things. Pride in a creature, in a sinner, is absolutely monstrous. Humility is very often enjoined in Scripture: "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called with all lowliness. Let nothing be done through vainglory. Put on, as the elect of God, humbleness of mind."² No temper is more highly eulogized in Scripture; and to the possession of none are made promises more exceeding great and precious. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; to walk humbly with thy God. Though the Lord be high, he hath respect to the lowly. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Whosoever shall humble himself like this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. God forgetteth not the cry of the humble. He resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is humble and of a contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."³

Humility formed one of the distinguishing ornaments of the character of our Lord. It was emphatically "the mind which was in Him,"⁴ who was meek and lowly; who humbled himself, and came not to be ministered to, but to minister. And, finally, it is greatly fitted to lessen the prejudices of the world against Christianity, and to shut the mouths of those who calumniate it, as calculated to make

¹ Rom. xii. 16.

² Eph. iv. 1, 2; Phil. ii. 3; Col. iii. 12.

³ Mic. vi. 8; Ps. cxxxviii. 6; Matt. v. 3, xviii. 4; Ps. ix. 12; James iv. 6; Luke xiv. 11; Isa. lvii. 15.

⁴ Phil. ii. 3-11.

men self-conceited, and despisers of all who do not embrace their opinions.

It is worthy of remark, that the last two Christian tempers we have been illustrating are, as it were, the elements of the first. Kindliness and humility naturally, necessarily produce courtesy. Everything by which courtesy is violated may be traced either to selfishness, the reverse of kindliness, or to pride, the reverse of humility.

Thus have I shortly considered the tempers and conduct in reference to mankind at large, which the apostle enjoins on believers, in order that their conduct might be "honest among the Gentiles." I cannot conclude this department of the subject without remarking what a wonderful book is the Bible! and what a universal remedy is Christianity for all the evils of man! There is nothing too great, nothing too little, for the Bible. It unfolds the principles which guide the government of the universe, and it gives directions for the regulation of man's every-day tempers and manners. It provides for the highest interests of the soul through eternity, and yet descends to point out the way, with wondrous minuteness of detail, in which most happiness may be attained by man during his short sojourn in the present state.¹ Christianity not only transforms the character, but improves the manners. It is the greatest tamer of savage man, as well as the only purifier of depraved man. There are, indeed, men, we confess it with regret, rude with it, but they would have been brutal without it.

Let us show our regard to the Bible by making the intended use of all its revelations. Let us show our regard to Christianity as a universal remedy, by submitting the whole frame of our natures, intellectual and active, to its healing influence. Let us see to it, that this portion of Scripture given by inspiration be indeed profitable to us. It

¹ Binney.

will be so only in the degree in which we are what it commands us to be—courteous, kindly, and humble. “Wherefore, lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty,” one of whose precepts we have been expounding, and “continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, that man shall be blessed in his deed.”

III. DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS UNDER PERSECUTION.

It is now time for us to turn our attention to the third class of duties enjoined by the apostle,—the duties of Christians in reference to their persecutors, viewed with a particular reference to the influence which the performance of these duties is calculated to have on the character both of Christianity and of Christians among unbelieving men.

§ 1. *Abstinence from all resentful retaliation, and meeting injury and reproach by kindness both in conduct and language.*

The first duty, then, which the apostle enjoins on Christians in reference to their persecutors, is abstinence from all resentful retaliation, and the meeting of injury and reproach by kindness, both in conduct and language. The injunction and enforcement of this duty occupy the greater part of the paragraph, from ver. 9 down to the middle of ver. 14. The duty, and the motives by which it is enforced,

are then successively to be considered. The duty is thus described: "Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing." The motives are four: 1. Christians are "called" to the discharge of this duty, ver. 9. 2. They are called to this, "that they may inherit a blessing," ver. 9. These two motives are illustrated by a quotation from the Old Testament Scriptures, vers. 10-12. 3. This is really the way to escape with the least possible suffering, ver. 13; and 4. If their peaceable, kind conduct does not produce its proper result on others, still, in thus suffering, Christians are blessed or happy, ver. 14. Let us attend to these topics in their order.

(1.) *The duty explained.*

The duty enjoined is abstinence from all resentful retaliation, and the meeting of injury and reproach by kindness, both in action and words: "Render not evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing." This injunction plainly goes on the assumption that they to whom it was addressed were exposed to injurious treatment and contumelious reproach. Their Lord and Master, when he was on earth, was most injuriously and unkindly treated, and his character and conduct were the objects of the most malignant misrepresentation and cruel obloquy. He was denied not only what—as an immaculately innocent, an absolutely perfect man, the greatest, the most disinterested, the most unwearied, the most successful of all philanthropists and public benefactors, a fully accredited divine messenger, an Incarnation of the Divinity—he had the strongest claims to; he was denied the common rights of humanity, and was represented as a demoniac and blasphemer, a teacher of error, and a stirrer up of sedition, "a glutton and wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." And he distinctly warned his followers that they

should meet with similar usage: "The servant," said he, "is not greater than his lord. They have persecuted me; they will also persecute you. In the world ye shall have tribulation. They have called the master of the house Beelzebub; how much more them of his household? Ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. Men shall hate you, and shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and shall cast out your name as evil for the Son of man's sake."¹

These predictions were fulfilled to the letter in the case of the apostles and many of the primitive Christians. They were "despised and buffeted, reviled and defamed, made as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things." "They were troubled, perplexed, and persecuted." "They endured a great fight of affliction; they were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions." Some were "tortured; others had trials of cruel scourgings; yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."² They were everywhere spoken against as despisers of the gods, haters of the human race, and perpetrators of the most shocking impurities and barbarities.

In succeeding ages, comparatively few Christians have been exposed to such extremity of ill-usage; yet in every age the apostle's declaration has been verified, "They that *will* live godly"—are determined to act out the principles and precepts of Christianity—"must suffer persecution."³ No consistent Christian passes through this world without

¹ John xv. 20, xvi. 33; Matt. x. 25, xxiv. 9.

² 1 Cor. iv. 9-13; 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9; Heb. xi. 36, 37.

³ 2 Tim. iii. 12.

personal experimental evidence that "this world is not his friend, nor this world's law;" and he who has never suffered in any way for his religion, who is an entire stranger to "the reproach of Christ," has some reason to read with alarm the words of our Lord: "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."¹

Whatever be the degree of ill-usage, whatever the measure of opprobrious language to which the Christian may be exposed, his duty is not "to render evil for evil, or railing for railing." There is nothing inconsistent with Christian principle and feeling in endeavouring, by using such means as law warrants, to disarm the man who has already wounded me, and who shows a disposition to repeat the injury,—to shut the mouth which has already calumniated me, and seems ready to pour forth additional torrents of abuse. Regard to society, and indeed to the poor infatuated individual himself, even more than a due respect to my own interests and feelings, may make this even my duty. But I must not seek to injure him. I must not inflict undeserved, nor even unnecessary suffering. Restraint, even punishment, may not be evil,—it may be benefit to the individual as well as to society; but even in securing this, I must avoid resentful feeling. I must not seek to avenge myself. And as to railing, reproachful, contumelious language, I may, in many cases I ought to, rebut false charges, which, if credited, might injure my reputation and lessen my usefulness; and in doing this, it may be absolutely necessary to state and substantiate what will necessarily lower the character of the railer; but I must make no statement, however true, of a disadvantageous kind, which self-defence or public duty does not require; and in making such statements, I must

¹ John xv. 19.

keep at the greatest distance from everything like abuse. I must not speak angrily, contemptuously, reproachfully, spitefully, provokingly.

There are some men who seem to think that they have done their duty in this respect, when they have refrained from injuring those who have never injured them—from speaking evil of those who have never spoken evil of them ; but that injury warrants injury, and evil-speaking sanctions evil-speaking in return. But as the good Archbishop says, “ One man’s sin cannot procure privilege to another to sin in that or the like kind. If another has broken the bonds of allegiance to God and charity to thee, yet thou art not the less tied by the same bonds still.”¹ Besides, to act thus is a trenching on the divine prerogative, as well as a violation of the divine commands. “ Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place to wrath : for it is written, Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord.”²

But this is only the one part, and the least part, of the Christian’s duty to him who, unprovoked, injures and maligns him : “ Contrariwise render blessing.” To “ bless” is frequently significant of kindness generally—kindness embodied in deeds as well as in words. It is the duty of the Christian to render benefit for injury, blessing for railing. He is to “ do good to those who hate him,”—to do whatever lies in his power to promote their real welfare, to go out of his way to do them a service ; and, not satisfied with his own efforts to advance their happiness, he is to call in the aid of infinite power, and wisdom, and kindness, by the prayer which has power with God. You are to “ pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you.”³ To “ bless” here, however, does not seem to mean either generally to do good or to invoke the divine blessing, though to do both, as

¹ Leighton.

² Rom. xii. 19.

³ Matt. v. 44.

we have seen, is the Christian's duty to his enemy. It is the opposite of railing; it denotes the Christian's duty to speak courteously and kindly to, and, as far as truth will admit, well of, the railers.

The duties here enjoined are just various modes of expressing that love to enemies which our Lord requires from all his disciples. Without this love, they cannot be performed. With this love, this command will not be found a grievous one; for love can intentionally do no harm to its object; love naturally prompts to do all practicable good to its object. I may pity, I may blame, I may even punish the object of my love; but I cannot do what is intended, what in my view is calculated, to injure him.

There is nothing unreasonable, nothing impracticable, in the requisitions before us. We are not required to regard the wicked with the sentiments of complacent esteem with which we regard the good. We are not required to regard the man who has injured us with the same feelings of grateful affection with which we regard our friends and benefactors. But we are required to cherish towards our enemies, however wicked and depraved and malicious, a sentiment of genuine good-will; to be sincerely desirous of their real welfare and happiness; never to lift up the hand against them, except self-defence or the public good require it; to forbid so much as a finger to move, a wish to stir against them at the instigation of malice; to have no pleasure in any of their sufferings; to feel no joy when they stumble; to be ever ready to relieve them when in a situation which makes them the fit objects of rational benevolence; and not to be more backward to show towards them the offices of kindness, which man owes to man, than to those who have never done us an injury.

If such is the conduct and the language by which a Christian should be characterized in reference to his worst

enemies, those who hate and persecute him because of his religion, what are we to say of those professors of Christianity, who treat those whom they call brethren with injustice and unkindness, and scourge them, unoffending and uncondemned, with malignant insinuations, railing accusations, and contemptuous abuse? The least we can say is, with Archbishop Leighton, to remark, that they are an "unchristian kind of Christians;" to warn them to beware what spirit they are of; to bid them remember this is not the spirit of Him who, even "when reviled, reviled not again;" and ponder the weighty truths, that "he who has not the Spirit of Christ is none of his;" and that for brethren to "bite and devour one another," for one servant to beat his fellow-servants, is neither becoming nor safe. The Great Judge obviously accounts such conduct immoral in no ordinary degree. When he is setting in order the sins of the forgetters of God, next after companionship with thieves and adulterers, he charges them with this: "Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother, thou slanderest thine own mother's son."¹

(2.) *The duty enforced.*

This injunction is enforced by powerful motives. To this mode of conduct Christians are "called:" to this mode of conduct they are called, in order "that they may inherit a blessing." This mode of conduct is of all others the best fitted to secure from suffering. And finally, in cases in which, after all, Christians are exposed to suffering, they are blessed in *thus* suffering. Let us shortly explain these statements, and show their force as motives.

(1.) Christians are called to the course of conduct which the apostle has been recommending. "Hereunto ye are called." To no duty are Christians more explicitly called.

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 23; Rom. viii. 9; Ps. l. 19.

Hear the words of our one Master in heaven : “ Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.” This was the doctrine of the scribes, and it was but too fully acted out in the conduct of their disciples, the Pharisees. But hear the law of the kingdom : “ I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them who curse you, do good to them who hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you, and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven : for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye ? do not even the publicans the same ? Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.”¹

The call of his word is seconded by the call of his example. He has left us a pattern, that we should follow his steps. He has fully exemplified his own precept ; and his call, in reference to this height of moral excellence, is not, ‘ Go up yonder,’ but, ‘ Come up hither.’ When reviled, he reviled not again ; when injured, with power to punish, he went on to bless. “ Father,” said he with his dying lips, in reference to his murderers, “ Father, forgive them ; for they know not what they do.” “ When we were ungodly, sinners, enemies, in due time he died for us.”²

The call is repeated by one of his apostles, who had drunk deep into his spirit : “ Recompense to no man evil for evil : bless them that curse you ; bless, and curse not. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath : for it is written, Vengeance is mine ; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him : if he thirst, give him drink : for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head,” which may

¹ Matt. v. 43-48.

² Luke xxiii. 34 ; Rom. v. 6, 8, 10.

melt his cold heart into ingenuous shame and grateful affection. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."¹

Paul's conduct, like that of his Master, corresponded with his words. How did he labour and pray for the salvation of his worst enemies! It is in reference to those who sought his life, and would have rejoiced in his ruin, that he says: "My heart's desire and prayer for them is, that they may be saved. I have great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart. I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." It was in reference to those who reviled him that he says: "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge."²

But the call not to render evil for evil, railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing, is to be found in the Old Testament as well as in the New. It comes from David as well as from his Son and Lord; from Solomon as well as from Paul. Acting on the principles laid down by his beloved brother Paul, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and that "whatsoever things were written before-time were written for our instruction," Peter here quotes a passage from the book of Psalms, in illustration of both parts of the complex motive, "Hereunto were ye called, that ye might inherit a blessing." The passage is to be found in the thirty-fourth Psalm; and as the words before us do not exactly correspond in words either to the Hebrew text or the Greek translation, though in meaning it exactly agrees with both, it is probable that the apostle quoted from memory, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The words are: "For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil, and do good; let him

¹ Rom. xii. 14, 17, 19-21.

² Rom. ix. 1-3, x. 1, 2.

seek peace, and pursue it: for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." In these words we have evidence that Christians are called not to render evil for evil, nor railing for railing. They are required to "refrain their tongue from evil, and their lips that they speak no guile; to eschew evil, and do good; to seek peace, and pursue it." And we have also evidence that they are called to this in order that they may inherit a blessing. It is thus that they are to escape a curse; "for the face of the Lord is against them who do evil:" and it is thus they are to obtain the life they love, and the good days they desire. It is thus that they are to secure the complacent eye and the propitious ear of God. It is to the illustration of the first motive, "Hereunto are ye called," that I am now inviting your attention.

"Hereunto are ye called;" for what says the Scripture? "Refrain thy tongue from evil, and thy lips that they speak no guile." "Evil" is here injury, wrong; and the whole injunction is equivalent to, 'Neither by open calumny, abuse, or railing, nor by secret, guileful, deceitful surmises, injure any man.' The command is universal in its reference, and therefore includes enemies as well as others. It is no reason why I should injuriously speak evil, whether openly or secretly, of a man, that he is my enemy. If I am called to refrain my tongue from evil, then I am called, too, not to render railing for railing.

"Eschew evil, and do good." When we look at the connection, we cannot doubt that evil here, as in the former clause, is wrong or injury. Carefully abstain from doing any injury to any human being. As the Apostle Paul explains this very expression, "Abhor that which is evil."¹ Regard every act of injury with abhorrence. But the

¹ Rom. xii. 9.

Psalmist calls on us not only to do no harm to any, but to do good to all. Do good. Good is here *benefit*; as in the precept, "Do good to all men, as ye have opportunity."¹ Make it your business to make men happy.

"Seek peace, and pursue it." Never quarrel with those with whom you are connected; and if they discover a disposition to quarrel with you, leave off such contention before it be meddled with. If they strike one blow, do not you, by returning it, give them an excuse for striking a second. "Pursue peace," even when it seems about to fly away; "follow peace with all men;" "as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."²

There may be something fanciful in Leighton's remark, but it is beautiful and just: "We may pursue peace among men, and not overtake it; we may use all good means, and fall short: but pursue it up as far as the throne of grace; seek it by prayer, and that will overtake it,—that will be sure to find it in God's hand, 'who stilleth the waves of the sea and the tumults of the people.' 'If he give quietness, who can give trouble?'" So much for the first motive, Ye are "called" to this mode of conduct. No part of the Christian's call is more explicit; few parts of it more frequently repeated.

(2.) The second motive is: Ye are called to this mode of conduct, in order that in following it "ye may inherit a blessing."³ God does not mean, by requiring you to deny and mortify your resentful feelings, and submit to unavenged wrong, that you are to be ultimate losers. If you "refrain your lips from evil;" if you "eschew evil, and do good;" if you "seek peace, and pursue it," you will obtain the life you love, you will "see good days." "God's eye will be on you; God's ear will be open to your prayers." While, on the other hand, "the face of the Lord will be against

¹ Gal. vi. 10.² Heb. xii. 14; Rom. xii. 18.³ Gal. iii. 13.

the ill-doer," the injurious man.¹ He can have no token of his complacency and approbation, for he does not possess it. Life is happiness ; good days are happy days. Happiness consists in enjoying God's favour. His favour is life, his loving-kindness better than life. To have his eye resting complacently on us, to be objects of his love and care, to have his ear open to our prayers ; to have him, infinitely powerful, wise, and good, always ready to listen to our petitions and supply our need,—this is life, this is happiness : while, on the other hand, to have his face set against us, to have his countenance covered with frowns, to have him looking at us as he did out of the pillar of cloud on the Egyptians struggling with the billows of the Arabian Gulf,—this is misery.

Our obedience cannot, indeed, deserve this inheritance of blessing, though our disobedience well deserves the corresponding curse ; but by God's appointment, and in the very nature of the case, while the benefits bestowed on men are "the gift of God through Jesus Christ,"—the result of sovereign kindness, manifesting itself in consistency with justice, through the mediation of our Lord,—they can be enjoyed only in a state of conformity of mind and heart to the will of God, discovering itself in a cheerful obedience to his commandments. "In the keeping of his commandments there is great reward ;" and it is through "a constant continuance in well-doing" that the full enjoyment of the inheritance of blessing is to be reached. It is in "adding to faith virtue, and knowledge, and temperance, and patience, and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity," that we are to enjoy the earnest of the inheritance ; and it is in persevering in this course that we are to look at last for "an abundant entrance into the everlasting

¹ *Ira totam faciem—πρόσωπον commovet : amor oculos ὀφθαλμούς tingit.*
—BENGEL.

kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,"—the inheritance itself, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, laid up in heaven" for all who, through faith and patience, are followers of those who have already entered on its possession.

(3.) The course recommended is of all others the best fitted to secure from suffering: "Who will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?"¹ The phraseology here requires some explanation. The phrase rendered "that which is good," may, viewed by itself, with at least equal propriety, be rendered 'Him who is good.'² The word "followers" signifies imitators; and in every case in which it is used in the New Testament, has a reference to persons.³ *Good* is here, as throughout the passage, equivalent to *kind*. If the rendering adopted by our translators be the true one, then a follower of that which is good is one who imitates what is kind in the character and conduct of others. If the rendering 'Him who is good' be preferred, then it refers either to God, who is, by way of eminence, the good or benignant One; and in this case it puts us in mind of what our Lord says, "Do good to them that

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 16, xi. 1; Eph. v. 1; 1 Thess. i. 6, ii. 14; Heb. vi. 12.

² Ἐὰν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ μιμηταὶ γίνεσθε.

³ "It should be read *imitators*: so the word signifies; and so, whereas *following* is either of a *pattern* or of an *end*, the former must be meant here, by the natural importance of that word. And hence, by *that which is good*, is not to be understood *created goodness*; for it is not enough to *imitate* that goodness, for so we must *be good*, but the words are capable of being read *him that is good*, or, which is all one, *the good*, as Plato and his followers used the expression εὖ ἀγαθὸν fully according to the sense of Matt. xix. 17. And so it is the *increate good*, the blessed God himself, formally considered under the notion of good. Nothing can harm you if you be like God: that is the plain sense of the scripture. A person truly like God is secure from any external violence, so far as that it shall never be able to invade his spirit. He is in spirit raised above the tempestuous stormy region, and converses where winds and clouds have no place."—HOWE: *Bless. of the Right.* chap. vii.

hate you, that ye may be the children of your Father in heaven ;” and of what the apostle says, “Be followers of God as dear children ;” or it may refer to our Lord, who, in not reviling when reviled, in not threatening when he suffered, set his people an example that they should follow his steps ; and who, both in the preceding and succeeding context, is represented by the apostle as our great exemplar.¹

The meaning in all these various modes of exposition is substantially the same : If you in your character manifest that benignity, even toward enemies, which characterizes the divine administration, and which so remarkably distinguished the words and actions of him who was “God manifest in flesh ;” if ye are thus characterized by harmlessness, and quiet unresisting suffering, “who,” says the apostle, “will harm you ?”

The meaning of this interrogation is not, ‘No one will harm you ;’ for the greatest harmlessness and forbearance and patience will not in every case protect from even very severe suffering ; but the meaning is, ‘If anything can protect you, this will.’ If, discovering these tempers, you yet suffer ; were you discovering opposite ones, you would suffer still more. It is justly remarked, “that there are virtues which are apt, in their own nature, to prevent injuries and affronts from others. Humility takes away all occasion of insolence from the proud and haughty ; it baffles pride, and puts it out of countenance. Meekness pacifies wrath, and blunts the edge of injury and violence. Patient suffering, and the returning of good for evil, is apt to allay and extinguish enmity, to subdue the roughest disposition, and to conquer even malice itself. Besides, the providence of God usually watches over the interests of those who, instead of seeking to avenge themselves,

¹ Matt. v. 48 ; Eph. v. 1 ; 1 Pet. ii. 21-23.

commit themselves in patience and well-doing to ‘Him who judgeth righteously.’ ‘When a man’s ways please the Lord, he,’ often in a very remarkable manner, ‘maketh his enemies to be at peace with him.’ It is true of more than the patriarchs during their wanderings, that God ‘suffers no man to do them wrong.’”¹

The words may with equal propriety be rendered, Who *shall* harm you? as who *will* harm you? God is with them; who can be effectually against them? who can really harm them? “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler.” “He shall deliver thee from six troubles; yea, in seven, there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death, and in war from the power of the sword. Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.” “Fear not then the reproach of men, neither be afraid of their revilings: for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool; but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.”²

(4.) The last motive to the course of conduct recommended is, that should they, as was not unlikely, notwithstanding their harmlessness and patience, be exposed to suffering for righteousness’ sake, for the sake of the righteous cause of their Lord, still they should be blessed. “But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye.” It is great honour to suffer shame and injury in such a cause. The peculiar aids of the good Spirit are secured to such

¹ Scott.

² Ps. xci.; Job v. 19-21; Isa. li. 7, 8.

sufferers. "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of God and of glory resteth on you."¹ Such sufferings identify those who are exposed to them, as to character and prospects, with the holy men who, in former ages, through much tribulation have entered into the kingdom; and to them are given peculiar, exceeding great, and precious promises, well calculated to make them "count it all joy when brought into such trials." "It is a faithful saying, If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." "Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake;"² for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." "Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mother, and children, and lands, with persecutions, and in the world to come life everlasting."³

And we find that in fact it has been so. Most wonderfully has God enabled his people to magnify his faithfulness, by showing how happy they were in the midst of their sufferings. Oh, how happy were the Apostles Peter and John, after being threatened by the Sanhedrim, when,

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 14.

² There can be no reasonable doubt that Peter directly refers to this passage in the Sermon on the Mount. It is as if he had said, 'Your Lord has pronounced you blessed, blessed for this very reason,—not only *although*, but *because*.' The reference is obscured by the use of the word 'happy;' it should have been 'blessed.'

³ James i. 2; 2 Tim. ii. 11, 12; Matt. v. 10, 12; Mark x. 30.

being "let go, they went to their own company," and "lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth, against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings; and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus."¹ Yes, they were happy. "The Spirit of God and glory rested on them." How happy were Paul and Silas, though they had many stripes laid on them, and been thrust into the inner prison, and had their feet made fast in the stocks, when, through the overpowering force of divine joy, they "at midnight prayed and sang praises to God, so that the prisoners heard them!"² Many such sufferers have gloried in their tribulation, "knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; for the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given to them."³

In addition to these particular motives to the conduct recommended, there is the general one, which equally applies to all the duties here enjoined in the paragraph: its tendency to reflect credit on their religion and Lord. But I shall have an opportunity of considering this, after I have

¹ Acts iv. 23-30.² Acts xvi. 25.³ Rom. v. 3-5.

illustrated the other injunctions which the apostle gives, respecting the conduct of Christians in reference to their persecutors.

The temper which we have been illustrating and recommending—a forbearing, forgiving disposition—is by worldly men very generally underrated, and even despised, as indicating meanness of spirit, and a want of force of character. But such an estimate is owing to ignorance of this temper, arising in many cases out of a moral incapacity to form a just idea of it. This temper springs from enlightened moral principles; it is consistent with, and indeed expressive of, true magnanimity. A Christian forbears to retaliate on his enemy, not because he fears him, but because he does not fear him. The calmness with which he receives injuries and insults has no more connection with fear, than the tranquillity and silence of Heaven when insulted by the voice of human blasphemy.

“Let the world account it a despicable simplicity; seek you still more of this dovelike spirit, the spirit of meekness and of blessing. It is a poor glory to vie in railings, to contest in the power of resenting wrong: the most abject persons have abundance of that great spirit, as foolish, low-minded persons account it. The true glory of man is to pass by a transgression. This is the noblest victory. And to excite us to aspire after it, we have the highest example. God is our pattern here. Men esteem much more some other virtues which make more show, and trample on love, compassion, and meekness. But though these violets grow low, and are of a dark colour, yet they are of a very sweet and diffusive smell. They are odoriferous graces. And the Lord propounds himself as our example in them. To love them that hate you, and bless them that curse you, is to be truly ‘the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good.’

Be you like that sun : however men behave themselves, keep on your course, and let your benignant influence rest on all within your sphere. Jesus Christ, too, sets in himself these things before us. 'Learn of me,' says he, not to heal the sick or to raise the dead, but 'to be meek and lowly in heart;' to forbear and forgive; to repay injury with benefit, execration with benediction. If you are his followers, this must be your way, for 'hereunto ye are called,' and you have much to encourage you to walk in it; for this is the end of it, 'the inheritance of a blessing.'"¹ Of this inheritance of blessings you have already the rich earnest, the sweet foretastes; and yet a little while, when a few more years are come, the possession, in all its inestimable preciousness, in all its immeasurable dimensions, shall be yours for ever. And then will it be made to appear, that "faithful is He who hath called you," that the inheritance was safely laid up for you, and you safely kept for it; and that the afflictions of the present state were light in comparison to the weight of its glory, and but for a moment in comparison of the eternity of its endurance.

§ 2. *Guarding against the fear of man by cultivating the due fear of God.*

I proceed now to the consideration of the second injunction laid on Christians exposed to persecution; and that is, to guard against the undue fear of man, by cultivating the due fear of God. While they were not to provoke their persecutors, they were not to quail before them. They were not to seek to obtain their favour, or escape their displeasure, by denying the truth or neglecting their duty. The injunction is contained in these words, "Be not afraid

¹ Leighton.

of their terror, neither be ye troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.”¹.

In these words the apostle obviously refers to a passage in the prophecies of Isaiah: “For the Lord spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me, that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people say, A confederacy; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid. Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be for a sanctuary.”² In this passage, as it stands in the prophet’s oracle, there can be little doubt that the fear of the unbelieving king and people of Judah, against which Jehovah warns the prophet and the pious Jews, is the fear which they entertained,—a fear of the allied powers of idolatrous Syria and apostate Israel, leading them to distrust Jehovah, and seek after a forbidden alliance with the idolatrous kingdom of Assyria.³ Instead of fearing Rezin and Pekah, and trusting in Sennacherib, he calls on them to fear and trust in Him as the Lord of hosts; and to manifest this fear and trust by avoiding whatever he forbade, and doing whatever he commanded, notwithstanding all the hazards to which their obedience might seem to expose them.

In the passage, as quoted and applied by the apostle to the state of the Christians to whom he was writing, the expression “their terror,” that is, plainly, the terror of those who persecuted them for righteousness’ sake, does not seem so much to refer to the terror which these persons felt, or to the objects exciting that terror, as to the terror which they endeavoured to strike into the victims of their malignity, and the objects which they held out to them to excite that terror. It seems just equivalent to the expression of the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Philippians, “And”

¹ See note A.

² Isa. viii. 11-13.

³ 2 Kings xvi. 5-9.

be "in nothing terrified by your adversaries." Let not the fear of any evil they can inflict on you induce you to deny your Lord, and make shipwreck of your faith.

The slight diversity of meaning in the words as originally employed by Isaiah, and as here employed by Peter, needs neither excite surprise nor give offence. Wherever a passage of Old Testament scripture is quoted in the New, to give evidence to a fact or principle, or to give authority to a precept, it must bear the same sense in the place where it is quoted as in the place where it originally occurs. Were it otherwise, just reason would be afforded for suspecting the inspiration, if not the honesty, of the writer employing the quotation. But when the words of the Old Testament are merely alluded to, employed by the New Testament writer to express his own ideas, the precise force of the words is to be gathered from the connection in which they are introduced; and there is nothing either to wonder at or to be offended by, though the thought clothed in them be somewhat different from that which they were originally employed to express.¹ The judicious application of this principle will free from all difficulty a variety of passages which have afforded plausible ground for cavil to infidels, and occasioned perplexity to inquirers and believers.²

Indeed, in the case before us, the object of fear to the Christian's persecutors was substantially the same thing as the object of fear which they held up to the minds of the

¹ That there is allusion, not proper quotation, here, will appear more manifest if the true reading be as Lachmann, Theile, Tischendorf, and Tregelles, following the ancient MSS., hold, κύριον δὲ τὸν Χριστὸν. If the apostle had not held the proper deity of Jesus Christ among τὰ πρῶτα φερμένα (Luke i. 1), it is utterly inconceivable that, even in the way of accommodation, he should apply to him what the prophet says of "Jehovah TSEBAOTH."

² See note B.

Christians, in order to terrify them into apostasy. They themselves considered the loss of worldly good, the infliction of worldly evil, as the things above all other things to be feared; and therefore, judging of others by themselves, it was by presenting these to the minds of Christians, as the necessary consequence of their maintaining their faith and profession, that they sought to trouble them, and make them "fall from their steadfastness." The loss of property, the loss of reputation, the loss of friends, the loss of ease, the loss of life,—poverty, reproach, imprisonment, torture, death in its most frightful forms,—were presented before the mind of the Christian for the purpose of terrifying him into an abandonment of his Lord, and a compliance with the will of his enemies.

These, no doubt, were altogether very frightful objects. But, says the apostle, "Be not afraid of their fear." Show them that what would dismay them does not dismay you. Show them that no evil, however alarming, which they can threaten or inflict, can so trouble you as to induce you to deny the truth or dishonour the Saviour.

This seems a hard saying, a difficult command; but it is not an unreasonable one. The persons addressed are supposed to be partakers of "like precious faith" with the apostles; to have laid hold of the hope set before them in the gospel, the hope of "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, laid up in heaven" for them, to which they are kept by the mighty power of God unto salvation. It is to very little purpose to call on mere professors of Christianity—men who "have a name that they live, but are dead," men who, being strangers to the faith of the gospel, must be strangers to the hope of the gospel—to make sacrifices for the cause of Christ, to remain unterrified amid such alarms, steadfast and immoveable in the face of such danger. But to a genuine Christian it

may well be said, "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, or the son of a man who shall be made as grass?" Thou needest not fear what man can do to thee. "Should such a one as thou flee?"¹

Of how little good comparatively can man deprive *him*! How little evil comparatively can he inflict on *him*! How short is the season during which he can deprive him of blessings, or inflict on him sufferings! He may deprive him of his worldly substance; but he "knows in himself that he has in heaven a more enduring substance." He may make him "poor in this world;" but he remains "rich in faith," "rich towards God," an inheritor of "the true riches." He may deprive him of civil liberty; but he cannot take from him the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free. He may enslave his body; but he cannot enthrall his spirit. The oppressor may hold

"His body bound, but knows not what a range
His spirit takes, unconscious of a chain;
And that to bind him is a vain attempt,
Whom God delights in, and in whom he dwells."²

He may shut him out from intercourse with his friends; but he cannot deprive him of the guardianship of angels, of the fellowship of God. The Christian needs not fear banishment from one part of the earth to another; for wherever he is, he is a pilgrim and stranger while here: "his citizenship is in heaven." He needs not fear death, but should rather welcome it, for that will convey him home to that better country, his true fatherland. Why should he fear man, "who, after he hath killed the body, has no more that he can do?" Besides, "all things shall work together for his good;" and "his light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will assuredly work out for him a far

¹ Isa. li. 12; Neh. vi. 11.

² Cowper, *Task*, 5.

more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory." Well, then, may the address be made to persecuted Christians, "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law ; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings : for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool ; but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished."¹ And well may they reply, "We will not fear though the earth be removed, though the mountains be cast into the midst of the sea ; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. The Lord of hosts is with us ; the God of Jacob is OUR refuge."²

Such, we apprehend, is the meaning of the apostle's first exhortation, though it may be right to state, before going further, that some interpreters have considered this terror of the Christians' persecutors as a phrase to be interpreted in the same way as the expression, "the fear of Isaac,"—an appellation used by Jacob for Jehovah as the object of his worship, the God of his fathers,—"the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac ;"³ in which case Christians are cautioned against fearing the false deities of their heathen persecutors, and are called to fear, not them, but the only living and true God, Jehovah. This use of the expression is, however, very rare, and the context seems plainly to lead to the interpretation we have adopted.

The only way in which a Christian can rise to this noble superiority to the fear of man, is by having his mind habitually occupied with God.⁴ We are delivered from the undue power of what is seen and temporal, when the

¹ Isa. li. 7, 8.

² Luke xii. 4 ; Rom. viii. 28 ; 2 Cor. iv. 17 ; Ps. xli. 2, 3, 11.

³ Gen. xxxi. 42.

⁴ Je crains Dieu, cher Abner, et je n'ai point d'autre crainte.—RACINE.

eye of the mind is opened to see Him who is invisible, and that which is eternal. That Christians, exposed to persecution, may be enabled to comply with the injunction, "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be ye troubled," the apostle calls on them to "sanctify the Lord God in their hearts."

The primary idea expressed by the word generally rendered SANCTIFY, both in the Old and New Testaments, seems to be separation, especially separation or setting apart for a religious purpose.¹ Objects of worship, places of worship, instruments of worship, and worshippers, are represented as sanctified and holy; and as, under the Old Testament, things and persons set apart or consecrated were ceremonially pure, and as, under the New Testament dispensation, persons set apart by the Lord for himself, by the "sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth," are set apart that they may be spiritually pure, "holy and without blame before God," holy comes often to be used as equivalent to free from moral impurity, possessed of spiritual moral excellence; and "sanctify" is used as equivalent to make thus holy, when used to denote what God does to man, or to declare to be holy, or to treat as holy, when used to denote what man does to God. It is not very easy to say with certainty, whether the word is here to be considered as used in its primary or in its secondary signification. In either case the injunction is full of important meaning; and, indeed, the meaning in both cases is substantially the same.

God is, by way of eminence, the "Holy, holy, holy" One, the separate One,² "dwelling in the light which is

¹ ἁγιάζω. שׁוּדָּן.

² "Holiness in the Scriptures comprehends majesty, as well as holiness in the limited sense. God is holy, inasmuch as he is separated from every created and finite being, and lifted above them, particularly above

inaccessible and full of glory;" not only completely removed from all defect and fault, from all that is weak and all that is wicked, but free from that defectibility which belongs to created being; possessed of an infinity of all the excellences of which we see traces among his creatures; full of being, of intelligence, of power, of righteousness, of benignity; distinguished by eternal, immutable, absolute perfection,—by a grandeur and an excellence, of which the highest conception we can form of grandeur and excellence comes infinitely short. His is being underived; liberty absolute; power unlimited and illimitable; knowledge intimate and infinite; wisdom unsearchable and unerring. And all this "excellent greatness," this "glorious majesty," is beautified by absolute moral perfection. His is a purity before which the holiness of angels waxes dim; and his a benignant tenderness, of which the yearning of a mother's heart is but a feeble figure. He is one who neither can be, purpose, say, nor do, anything that is not infinitely wise, just, and good. This is the holy, separated One.

This is what he is in himself. Let this be what he is to thee. Sanctify him in thy heart. Think of him as the Holy One. Separate from him in thy conceptions all that is imperfect, human, evil, capricious, changeable, malignant. Feel towards him as the Holy One. Let thy heart be, as it were, his temple; and there let Him dwell alone in its inmost shrine, esteemed and loved, feared and trusted, in a manner altogether different from that in which any created being, however excellent, is esteemed and loved, feared and trusted. To give to any created being the kind or degree of esteem, or affection, due to Him, is to profane his name,

sin, which can establish its seat only within the domain of finite beings. Isa. lvii. 15, xl. 25, 26; Hab. iii. 3; Ps. xcix. 3, cxi. 9. The signification of purity, so far from being the only one of *שִׁטְהוּ*, cannot be considered even as the fundamental one."—HENGSTENBERG on Ps. xxii. 3.

to desecrate his temple, by introducing idols there. Treat him as what he is, and do this in thine heart,—not only with thy lips by praise and prayer, not only in external acts of homage and obedience, but in thine heart, with thy whole intelligent, affectionate nature; really, not in profession merely, but worshipping Him who is a spirit, in spirit and in truth.

“Beware of an external, superficial sanctifying of God, for he takes it not so; he will interpret that a profaning of him and of his name. Be not deceived, he is not mocked: he looks through all visages and appearances, in upon the heart; sees how *it* entertains him, and stands affected to him, if it be possessed with reverence and love more than either thy tongue or carriage can express; and if it be not so, all thy seeming worship is but injury, and thy speaking of him is but babbling, be thy discourse never so excellent; and the more thou hast seemed to sanctify God, while thy heart has not been chief in the business, thou shalt not by such service have the less, but the more fear and trouble in the day of trouble, when it comes upon thee. No estate is so far off from true consolation, and so full of horrors, as that of the rotten-hearted hypocrite. His rotten heart is sooner shaken to pieces than any other. If you would have heart's peace in God, you must have this heart-sanctifying of him. It is the heart that is vexed and troubled with fears. The disease is there; and if the prescribed remedy reach not there, it will do no good; but let your hearts sanctify him, and then he will fortify and establish your hearts.”¹

There are two illustrations given of this sanctification of Jehovah, in the passage in the prophecy of Isaiah to which the apostle refers. He who thus sanctifies the Lord of hosts, Jehovah himself, or, as the apostle has it, the Lord

¹ Leighton.

God in his heart, makes him "his fear and his dread," and he finds him "a sanctuary;" and he is thus enabled not to be afraid of the fear of his persecutors, neither to be troubled. He who sanctifies the Lord in his heart, "makes him his fear and his dread;" that is, he fears him, and he supremely fears him. When the truth about the divine character really dwells in the mind, the individual cannot but fear him. A holy awe fills the heart; not the fear that has torment, not the terrible apprehension of God as an omnipotent, omniscient, all-wise enemy, determined to destroy us; but such a veneration of his infinite greatness, and such an esteem of his infinite excellence, as are necessarily accompanied with a deep-seated conviction that his favour is happiness, his displeasure misery, and that it is madness to forfeit his approbation for any conceivable earthly good,—madness to incur his displeasure, in order to avoid any conceivable earthly evil. And this fear is supreme. He makes HIM his fear and dread. HE seems to him the only being in the universe that is "worthy" *thus* "to be feared." Nothing in the wide compass of real or possible being is, in his estimation, so terrible as HIS frown, the loss of his favour, the incurring of his disapprobation.

But he who sanctifies the Lord God in his heart, not only makes him his "fear and dread,"—cherishes a supreme reverence for him; but he finds him "a sanctuary,"—cherishes a supreme confidence in him. He in whose mind God is the object only of fear, has not sanctified God in his heart. He has not "seen God, neither known him;" for it is just as certain that none can know him without trusting in him, as it is that none can know him without fearing him. "They that know his name, put their trust in him."¹ They who really sanctify him in their heart, find in him a sanctuary, a place of refuge and security.

¹ Ps. ix. 10.

They see that He, He alone, is a suitable upmaking portion to their soul; that from his infinite perfection, as manifested in the person and work of his incarnate Son, he is at once able and disposed to make them happy, in all the extent of their nature, up to their largest capacity of enjoyment, during the entire eternity of their being. What more is necessary to make one happy, happy for ever, than infinite power, regulated by infinite wisdom, and influenced by infinite benignity?

The manner in which the sanctification of God in the heart, leading thus to supreme veneration for, supreme confidence in, Him, operates in raising the persecuted Christian above all the power of worldly fears to dishearten him in, or terrify him out of, the onward path of faith, and profession, and obedience, is obvious. Fearing God, the Christian knows no other fear. "That fear, as greatest, overtops and nullifies all lesser fears. The heart possessed by this fear has no room for the others. It resolves the man, in point of duty, what he should and must do: that he must not offend God by any means. It lays down that as indisputable, and so eases the mind of doubtings and debates of that kind, whether I shall comply with the world and deny truth, or neglect duty, or commit sin, to escape reproach or persecution." He who, sanctifying God in his heart, has made him his fear and his dread, sees very clearly, feels very strongly, that he "ought to obey God rather than man;" and that the question is an equally clear one, whether viewed as a question of duty or a question of interest. "It seems to him immeasurably best to retain His favour, though, by taking the course that is necessary to secure this, he should displease the most respected and considerable person he knows. He holds it as absolutely certain that it is better, in every view of the case, to choose the universal and highest displeasure of the

world for ever, than his smallest disapprobation, even for a moment. One thing appears to him as self-evident, that the only indispensable necessity to him is to cleave to God, and obey him."¹

We have some striking instances of the power of the fear of God to subdue, to annihilate the fear of man, recorded in Scripture. When Moses' parents by faith sanctified Jehovah in their heart, making him their "fear and dread," they at all hazards disobeyed the wicked edict requiring them to murder their son, and "were not afraid of the king's commandment;" and their illustrious son, under the influence of the same principle, "forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king."² The fear of God annihilated in the minds of the three Hebrew youths the fear of the fury of the Babylonian tyrant, and of the flames of his fiery furnace; and in the mind of Daniel, the fear of the loss of high station, and all the horrors of the den of lions.³ It enabled the Christian apostles to set at nought all the threats of their persecutors. It enabled their and our Lord, with all the shame and agony of the cross full in his view, to confess the truth, and "finish the work which the Father had given him to do." This holy fear, with its kindred holy confidence, led him to "give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; to hide not his face from shame and spitting. For the Lord God," says he, "will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me; who will contend with me? let us stand together: who is mine adversary? let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord God will help me; who is he that shall condemn me? lo, they shall wax old as doth a garment; the moth shall eat them up."⁴ And he calls on all his

¹ Leighton.² Heb. xi. 23, 27.³ Dan. iii. 6.⁴ Isa. l. 7-9.

followers to follow in his steps : when exposed to suffering, to fear the Lord, to trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. This fear leads directly to this conclusion, and enables the Christian to hold it fast at all hazards : ‘It is not necessary to have the favour of the world ; but it is necessary to have the favour of God : it is not necessary that I should live in comfort, nor indeed that I should live at all ; but it is necessary that I hold fast the truth, that I should obey God, that I should honour Him in life and in death.’

That confidence in God, which, equally with fear of him, is the result of sanctifying him in the heart, naturally also raises the persecuted Christian above the fear of man. He who knows God, and who believes that he has said, “I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee,” may boldly say, will boldly say, “The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do to me ;” “God is my refuge and my strength, a very present help in trouble : therefore I will not fear ;” “God is my rock and my salvation ; he is my defence ; I shall not be moved. In him is my salvation and my glory : the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times ; ye people, pour out your hearts before him : God is a refuge for us. Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree a lie : to be laid in the balance, they are altogether lighter than vanity. God hath spoken once ; twice have I heard this, that power belongeth to God. Also to thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy.”¹ How reasonable, then, is it to trust in him ! How unreasonable to fear them ; and how powerfully is trust in him calculated to put down fear of them !²

Thus have I endeavoured shortly to illustrate the second injunction given by the apostle to Christians as to their so conducting themselves under persecution, as that even their

¹ Ps. lxi. 1, 2, 5-12.

² See note C.

enemies might be compelled to honour both them and their religion : "Be not afraid of their terror, but sanctify the Lord in your hearts."

Sanctifying the Lord in the heart, and making him our fear and our confidence, is the duty of the Christian, not only when exposed to persecution for righteousness' sake, but at all times and in all circumstances ; and it is the true and effectual antidote to all the fears and troubles of whatever kind that he is exposed to in the present state. The Christian is often harassed with fears in reference to his external circumstances. Let him sanctify the Lord in his heart ; realize the truth respecting Him ; fear Him ; trust in Him ; and he will thus learn to "be careful," that is, anxious, "about nothing."¹ When David sanctified God in his heart, he was delivered from all his fears ; and this is his advice and encouragement to all who, like him, are involved in such perplexities, to fear and trust in the Lord : "O fear the Lord, all ye his saints : for there is no want to them who fear him. The young lions may lack, and suffer hunger ; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants ; and none that trust in him shall be desolate."²

But the Christian is liable to fears and perplexities of a more painful kind still. The troubles of remorse, the fears of hell, sometimes agitate him. "The sorrows of death compass him ; the pains of hell get hold of him. He has found trouble and sorrow." He feels as if his unseen foes were about to triumph over him, and that continued resistance is hopeless. But let him sanctify the Lord in his heart. Let him so realize the truth about Him, as, while trembling at his word and standing in awe of his judgments, he at

¹ Phil. iv. 6.

² Ps. xxxiv. 9, 10, 17, 22.

the same time trusts in his mercy and hopes in his promise; and he will be reassured and comforted. Let him contemplate at once the awful and amiable glories of his character as the God who cannot clear the guilty, and yet, through the propitiation he has set forth in the blood of his Son, pardons iniquity, transgression, and sin, blotting them out for his own sake as “a just God and a Saviour,” “just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus;”¹ and he will find security and peace amid all the fightings without and the fears within.

The way to have true rest in the heart is to have God there, through the knowledge and faith of the truth respecting him; and to sanctify him there, to cherish towards him those affections of supreme reverence and confidence to which he is entitled.

“He is the source and centre of all minds,
Their only point of rest.
From him departing, they are lost, and rove
At random, without honour, hope, or peace.”²

You, then, who would “dwell at ease, and be quiet from the fear of evil,” seek to have the Lord God in your heart; seek to sanctify him there, by making him at once your fear and confidence.

It is thus that the sinner as well as the saint is to get rid of his fears. We say to the sinner, as well as to the saint, “Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace; thereby good shall come to thee.”³ Know that his nature as well as his name is holy love. Let both these letters of his name be impressed on your heart—holiness and grace; and learn so to fear his holiness and justice and power as to cease to oppose him, under a deep conviction that it is equally wicked and unwise, criminal and ruinous. O learn

¹ Ps. cxvi. 3; Isa. xlv. 21; Rom. iii. 26.

² Cowper.

³ Job xxii. 21.

so to trust his grace and faithfulness, as gladly and gratefully to receive what, in the word of the truth of the gospel, he sincerely and urgently offers thee, sinner as thou art—a free forgiveness, a full salvation.

To all, then, whether saint or sinner, we proclaim as the only means of obtaining true composure of spirit and permanent peace in this region where there is so much to terrify and trouble, “Sanctify the Lord in your heart; let him be your fear and dread, and he will be to you a sanctuary.” Happy those who, by complying with the command, enter into peace. But oh! what will become of those who refuse this divine call, who set at nought this divine counsel? What will become of them “when their fear cometh as desolation, and their destruction as a fire that burneth; when distress and anguish come upon them?” “*Now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation.” *Then* will be the time of reckoning; *then* will be the day of vengeance. Then there can be no peace to these wicked ones. Then will be at once the realization of their worst fears; and fears of greater evils still, the prospect of eternally accumulating misery. Sinner, “if thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.”¹

§ 3. *Readiness at all times to give an answer to every one that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them.*

The third injunction given to Christians, as exposed to persecution, is, to “be always ready to give an answer, to every one who should ask them a reason of the hope that was in them, with meekness and fear.”

The inspired injunction obviously takes for granted that Christians are distinguished by the possession of a peculiar hope—they have “a hope in them;” that this hope is not a groundless one—a reason can be given for it, it can be

¹ Prov. ix. 12.

defended; that this hope ought not, and cannot, be concealed; and that for this hope Christians may be, are likely to be, called on to give an account;—and it calls on Christians, in these circumstances, to give an answer to every one that asks them a reason of their hope: in other words, to state and defend the grounds of their hope; to be always prepared to do this; and finally, to do this, whenever it is done, with meekness and fear. These are, as it were, the elementary parts into which the injunction naturally resolves itself, and I shall briefly direct your attention to them in their order.

Christians are distinguished by the possession of a peculiar hope. They have a hope in them. It is not the possession of hope generally that distinguishes Christians from the rest of mankind; for it would not be easy to fix on any characteristic that more certainly belongs to the whole race, than the capacity and disposition to anticipate with desire and delight future good. Unbelieving men are indeed said to “have no hope,” but it is the same way in which they are said to be “without God.”¹ They have hopes many, as they have gods many; though strangers to the true God, and to the hope which maketh not ashamed. Human suffering would be often intolerable, were it not for the hope of deliverance. There is truth as well as beauty in the adage, “If it were not for hope, the heart would break;” and, even when happiest, it will be found that a very considerable portion of man’s enjoyment arises, not from what he has, but from what he hopes for.

“Hope springs eternal in the human breast;
Man never is, but always to be blest.”²

But as, while all men believe as well as the Christian, he has his peculiar belief, which distinguishes him from all

¹ Eph. ii. 12.

² Pope.

other men ; so, while all men hope, the Christian has his peculiar hope, which equally distinguishes him from all other men,—a hope of which he was once destitute, and of which he obtained possession, when, by the faith of the truth, he became a Christian in the only true and proper sense of that word.¹

That hope thus obtained, is variously described in the New Testament. It is termed “the hope of salvation ;” “the hope of eternal life ;” “the hope of the glory of God ;” “the hope of the righteousness,” or justification, “by faith.”² Each of these terms is full of meaning.

It is “the hope of salvation ;” that is, of deliverance from evil, both physical and moral, in all its forms and degrees, for ever. It is “the hope of eternal life ;” that is, not merely of immortal existence, but of an eternity of what constitutes the life of life, true happiness,—a happiness suited to all our various capacities of enjoyment, filling these capacities to an overflow,—a happiness pervading the whole nature throughout unending duration.

It is “the hope of the glory of God.” The glory of God in this expression seems equivalent to the approbation of God. Men have sinned, and lost God’s approbation. They are not, they cannot be, the objects of his approbation. They are the objects of his judicial displeasure, of his deep moral disapprobation. Little as sinful men think of it, this is the sum and substance of their misery ; and the removal of this, and restoration to his favour, are at once absolutely necessary and completely sufficient to make them happy. The Christian’s hope is a hope that he shall ultimately be just what God would have him to be, perfectly holy, perfectly happy, in intimate relation, in complete conformity, to God ; that the eye of his Father in heaven

¹ Eph. i. 12, 13. Trusted ; margin, hoped.

² 1 Thess. v. 8 ; Tit. iii. 7 ; Rom. v. 2 ; Gal. v. 5.

shall yet rest on him with entire moral complacency, and his word pronounce him, as a part of his completed new creation, very good.

It is "the hope of the righteousness," or justification, "by faith;" that is, not the hope of obtaining justification by faith, for justification by faith is, as it were, the fundamental blessing of Christianity, not a benefit to be conferred at some future period. It is something that the Christian possesses already. It is not one of the blessings of salvation of which the apostle speaks, when he says, "We are saved by hope;" that is, our salvation is yet future—ours, not in possession, though in sure prospect. The hope of the justification by faith is the hope that grows out of justification by faith; the hope which only the justified by faith can cherish. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith to this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."¹

Such are some of the scriptural designations of this hope. Let us now inquire a little more particularly what are its objects?

The Christian is "confident that he who has begun the good work" in him, "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;" that he will "preserve him from every evil work, unto his heavenly kingdom;" that he will "make his grace sufficient for him;" that he will "strengthen him with all might, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness;" that he will "supply all his need according to his glorious riches;" that he will "never leave him, never forsake him;" that he will make "all things work together for his good," and even his afflictions, however severe and long-continued, to "work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." He hopes that "Christ will

¹ Rom. v. 1, 2.

be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death.”¹ And he has hope in death, hope after death. He hopes that, when his spirit becomes “absent from the body,” it will become “present with the Lord;” being with him where he is, and, beholding and sharing his glory, mingling with “the innumerable company of angels, and with the spirits of the just made perfect;” being “before the throne of God, and serving him day and night in his temple; while he who sits on the throne dwells among them, and they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither does the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and lead them to fountains of living waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”² His “flesh also rests in hope.” His hope is the hope of the resurrection to life; “the blessed hope of the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He looks for Him from heaven, “to change his vile body, and fashion it like unto his own glorious body.” He hopes that “this corruptible shall put on incorruption, this mortal shall put on immortality; that what is sown in corruption, shall be raised in incorruption; what is sown in dishonour, shall be raised in glory; what is sown in weakness, shall be raised in power; what is sown a natural body, shall be raised a spiritual body.” He is looking for Him to come “the second time without sin unto salvation;” and his hope is, that “when He shall appear, he shall appear with Him in glory;” being “like Him, seeing Him as He is.” He is hoping for this “manifestation of the sons of God,”—this “adoption, the redemption of the body;” and his final hope is that, body and soul, “he shall ever be with the Lord.”³

¹ Phil. i. 6, iii. 19; Col. i. 11; Heb. xiii. 5; Rom. viii. 28; 2 Cor. iv. 17.

² 2 Cor. v. 6-8; John xvii. 24; Heb. xii. 22, 23; Rev. vii. 15-17.

³ Ps. xvi. 9; Tit. ii. 13; Phil. iii. 21; 1 Cor. xv. 42-44, 53; Heb. ix. 28; 1 John iii. 2; Rom. viii. 19, 23; 1 Thess. iv. 17.

Such is the hope of the Christian with regard to himself; and he cherishes the same hope in reference to all his brethren in Christ. He hopes that Christ, who loved the Church, will, after having purified her by the washing of water through the word, "present her to himself" as a bride adorned for her husband, "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." He hopes for a "gathering together" of all the faithful at the coming of the Lord; he hopes that when the Lord descends from heaven, all the dead in Christ shall rise, all the living in Christ shall be changed, and that they shall "together be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air," and shall "together be made perfect."¹

The Christian, too, has characteristic hopes concerning the cause and kingdom of his Lord. He hopes for its ultimate triumph over all its opposers, all the powers of darkness, all the forms of evil, ignorance, error, superstition, fanaticism, idolatry, in all their endless diversities of false principles and depraved dispositions, which counterwork its benignant tendencies, and have hitherto rendered its progress so slow, and its influence so limited. He hopes for a period when the idols shall be utterly abolished, when "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord," when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ," when "men shall be blessed in Him, and all nations call him blessed."² Such is the Christian's hope.

And this hope is not groundless; it is no airy dream, no uncertain probability. It rests on the power and wisdom and faithfulness and benignity of God, pledged in a plain, well-accredited revelation of his will. It has come to him

¹ Eph. v. 25-27; 2 Thess. ii. 1; 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17; Heb. xi. 40.
Οὗτοι πάντες—μὴ χωρὶς ἡμῶν.

² Isa. xi. 9; Rev. xi. 15; Ps. lxxii. 17.

by "the word of the truth of the gospel,"¹ to understand and believe and love which, his mind and heart have been opened by the effectual working of the good Spirit. He has formed these expectations not in consequence of following cunningly devised fables, but in consequence of believing that word, which brought along with it powerful demonstration that it was "not the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which worketh effectually in them believing it;"² tranquillizing the mind, pacifying the conscience, purifying the heart, transforming the character.³ Thus he knows whom he has believed, and in whom he hopes. His hope is in God. Jehovah is the hope of his people. They hope in his mercy; they hope in his word. "Our Lord Jesus himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace."⁴

These hopes dwell in the heart of the Christian. There seems emphasis in the expression, "the hope that is in you." It has not merely been "set before" you; it has been embraced by you. It is not a mere professed hope; it is a real hope, a living, not a dead hope.

But though it dwells in the heart, it does not, it should not, it cannot, remain concealed. From its very nature, it must manifest itself both in words and in actions: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." "Knowing," says the apostle, referring to one leading object of the Christian hope, "that he who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with

¹ Col. i. 5.

² 1 Thess. ii. 13.

³ "It is certain there is no hope without some antecedent belief that the thing hoped for may come to pass; and the strength and steadfastness of our hope is ever proportioned to the measure of our faith."—BENTLEY.

⁴ 2 Thess. ii. 16.

you ; we also believe, and therefore speak." Christians cannot but speak of the things which they hope for ; and "every one who hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure," whom they are hoping to see, and to whom they are hoping to be conformed when he appears.¹ No ; Christian hope cannot be concealed. What fills the mind to an overflow, must become manifest. Even the Old Testament believers "declared plainly that they were seeking a country, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."²

The profession of hope on the part of the Christian is, moreover, matter of positive obligation. It is expressly commanded. It is necessarily implied in the duty of confessing Christ, and is requisite to our performance of our highest duties to our fellow-men. "Let us hold fast the profession of our hope" (hope, not faith, is the genuine reading), says the apostle, "without wavering, for he is faithful that hath promised ;"³ and he assures us that this is the proof of our belonging to "the house," the family of Christ, that "we hold fast the confidence"—that is, the free, fearless avowal of—"and the rejoicing of," the glorying in, "the hope of the gospel, firm to the end."⁴ The Christian acts very unworthily who behaves as if he was ashamed of his hope—ashamed of a hope which will never make ashamed any who really cherish it. The avowal of the Christian's hope is necessarily implied in that confession of the mouth which the apostle represents as, equally with faith in the heart, requisite in order to salvation. A Christian cannot declare his faith without avowing his hope ; and he cannot neglect the declaration of his faith without exposing himself to that tremendous denunciation : "Who-soever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 13, 14 ; 1 John iii. 3.

² Heb. xi. 13, 14.

³ Heb. x. 23.

⁴ Heb. iii. 6. *Τὴν παρρησίαν καὶ τὸ καύχημα τῆς ἐλπίδος.*

my Father who is in heaven. He that is ashamed of me, and of my words, before this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”¹

It has been justly said, “To all who deliberately hold the truth captive, we are bound to declare that they do not possess the truth, or rather that the truth does not possess them—does not dwell in them richly. Religious conviction, which refuses to express itself, is disowned by that very act.”

Those doctrines which embody the Christian’s hope are the saving truth. That every one who is in possession of that truth should make it known to others, is the first duty which the second great commandment of the law, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,” binds on the conscience. In presenting it to their belief, he must avow his own ; and he cannot, as we have seen, avow his faith without professing his hope. “We are debtors of religious truth to our brethren,” says one of the greatest writers of our age, “so soon as we ourselves become possessed of it ;” “we are debtors in the strictest sense of the term, for, properly speaking, the truth is not the exclusive property of any one. Every good which may be communicated by its possessor without impoverishing himself, cannot remain exclusively his own. If this proposition be not true, morality falls to the ground. How much more does this hold good of a blessing which is multiplied by division, of a spring which becomes more abundant as it pours out its waters ?”² The hope of the gospel is necessary to true comfort here, to perfect happiness hereafter. I am bound then to communicate, so far as man can do it, this hope to those who are destitute of it. How can I do this but by telling them what I hope for, and why I hope for it ; showing them how that hope became mine, and how it may become theirs ?

¹ Matt. x. 33 ; Luke xii. 8.

² Vinet.

For the Christian to keep his hope to himself, were it possible, would be to deny the bread of life to those who are perishing of hunger. Almost every denial may find some excuse but this. We are not bound to give bread to all men in all circumstances ; but we do owe to all men, in all circumstances, the communication of saving truth.

Even though the Christian were disposed to conceal his hope, he would find it difficult to do so ; for he is likely, as the apostle intimates, to be called to give an account of it : a reason of his hope is likely to be demanded of him. Such inquiries may originate in various and opposite causes. Some, who are honestly inquiring after truth and happiness, having discovered that the hopes which the world offers to its votaries are liable to be disappointed, and even when realized cannot confer true permanent enjoyment, may ask a reason of the hope that is in the Christian, that they may see whether it meets the exigencies of their case, and, if it does so, that they may find how they may become partakers of it ; others may make such inquiries merely for the purpose of cavilling at and casting ridicule on the Christian and his hope ; and others, armed with civil power, may call him in question for his hope and faith, and for his conduct as influenced by this hope and faith. In the primitive age, and in other ages too, the faith and hope of the gospel have often led their possessors to refuse compliance with what custom and law required, and to follow certain courses which custom and law condemned and proscribed ; and Christians have, in consequence of this, often been “ called before governors and kings, magistrates and powers,” as their Lord forewarned them, to give an account of that hope which distinguished them from those among whom they lived, and of the grounds on which it rested. When the connection of the passage is carefully attended to, it can scarcely be doubted that it is to this last species of inqui-

sition into the nature and ground of the Christian's hope that the apostle directly refers.

Whatever may be the motives of the inquirers, it is the duty of the Christian, in ordinary circumstances, "to give an answer to every one who asketh him a reason of the hope that is in him." What the apostle calls on Christians to do, is to *defend* their hope to those who called on them to give an account of it, for that is the force of the word rendered *answer*:¹ apology, in the sense in which the word is used in reference to the Apologies of the Fathers for Christianity, the publication of which was indeed just a specimen of obedience to the apostle's injunction,—a defence of the faith and hope of the gospel, by a statement of their grounds to those Roman magistrates who persecuted them. Every Christian, when called on to give an account of his hope, is to defend it. He is to do this, first, by distinctly stating what it is; by giving a plain account of what are the objects of his hope: and this of itself, if candidly listened to, will go far to answer all the purposes of defence. But he must do more than this: he must be ready to show, that what he hopes for is really promised in the Scriptures, and that these Scriptures are indeed "given by inspiration of God,"—an infallible and authoritative revelation of the divine mind and will, for the regulation of the religious sentiments and conduct of mankind, and therefore a solid foundation for his hope. He must show that his hope is no mere imagination, but is founded on the most certain truth; and that in performing the duties, making the sacrifices, cherishing the expectations, which naturally flow from its admission, he is acting a reasonable, the only reasonable part, and that to abandon his hope, or to do anything inconsistent with it, were to act the part of a fool and a madman. And the Christian is to do this, not only where it

¹ Ἀπολογία.

may be done without inconvenience or hazard, but in the face of the greatest dangers, though sure to draw down on himself ridicule, scorn, contumely, torture, death. "Consequences should be accounted for nought in the discharge of this duty, which is of an absolute nature; or, if considered at all, should be regarded only as motives and additional inducements to its fulfilment."¹

There are, however, cases in which a formal defence of the Christian's hope, even when he is called in question for it, could serve no good purpose. The command of our Lord is not superseded by, for it is not inconsistent with, that of his apostle: "Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again to rend you."² It has been justly observed, "that the truth is not to be scattered at random like contemptible dust: it is a pearl which must not be exposed to be trodden under foot by the profane. To protect it by an expressive silence, is sometimes the only way we can testify our own respect for it, or conciliate that of others. He who cannot be silent respecting it, under certain circumstances, does not sufficiently respect it. Silence is on some occasions the only homage truth expects from us. This silence has nothing in common with dissimulation; it involves no connivance with the enemies of truth; it has no other object than to protect it from needless outrage. This silence, in a majority of instances, is a language; and when, in the conduct of those who maintain it, everything is consistent with it, the truth loses nothing by being suppressed. Or, to speak more correctly, it is not suppressed: it is vividly, though silently, pointed out; its dignity and importance are placed in relief; and the respect which occasioned this silence, itself imposes silence on the witnesses of its manifestation."³ The greatest

¹ Vinet.² Matt. vii. 6.³ Vinet.

of all witnesses to the truth, who, in delivering his testimony, set his face as a flint, not fearing the cross, despising the shame, maintained on some occasions a dignified silence even when questioned; but it was only where the truth had already been declared by Him, and when a renewed declaration of it could have served no good purpose. His object was not to shelter himself, but the truth, from unnecessary insults. Generally, his conduct corresponded with the prophetic oracle concerning him: "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation."¹

But though Christians may not be required in every case to give an answer, even when questioned, respecting their hope, they must always hold themselves "ready" to do so when called on. To be "ready," is to be prepared, when called on, to state and defend the Christian hope. For this purpose it is necessary that the Christian should be constantly giving all diligence towards maintaining the full assurance of hope in his own heart; that he should be familiarly acquainted with the objects of his hope, as these are stated in the Holy Scriptures; and with the manner, too, in which those things, which it would seem at first sight to be folly and presumption in man to hope for, have become the object, the reasonable object, of his hope, and may become the reasonable object of the hope of every man who, like him, believes in Jesus. He must be able to show how he once cherished false hopes; and how he was made ashamed of these hopes; and how he was, when destitute of all hope, led, in the faith of the truth of the

¹ Ps. xl. 9, 10.

gospel, to lay hold on the hope there set before him. He must be able to show how the free grace of God, manifested in a consistency with his righteousness, through the mediation of his Son Jesus Christ, when apprehended in the statements and promises of the gospel, lays a solid foundation for all the great and glorious expectations which he entertains. And as such a statement can be satisfactory only on the supposition that the Bible is indeed a divine revelation, he must be prepared to show, that in giving credit to its declarations, and grounding his hope on them, he has acted a reasonable part; because it is indeed given by the inspiration of that God who cannot lie, who cannot be deceived, and who cannot deceive.

The importance of an accurate and extensive knowledge of the evidence of Christianity can scarcely be overrated, if it be not substituted in the place of an experimental knowledge of Christianity itself. It is of vital importance to the individual Christian's peace and improvement. It is intimately connected with the vigour of his graces and the abundance of his consolations. I do not say that a man is not a Christian who cannot give a distinct account of the evidence of the divinity of the religion which he professes to believe; but in proportion to the imperfection and indistinctness of his views on this subject, will be the deficiency and insecurity of his attainments, both in holiness and in comfort. These are weighty words of Richard Baxter: "I take it to be the greatest cause of coldness in duty, weakness in grace, boldness in sinning, and unwillingness to die, that our faith in the divine authority of the Scriptures is either unsound or infirm. Few Christians among us have anything better than an implicit faith on this point. They have received it by tradition. Godly ministers and Christians tell them so: it is impious to doubt it, and therefore they believe it. And this worm lying at the root, causeth

the languishing and decaying of the whole. Faith in the verity of the Scriptures would be an exceeding help to the joy of the saints. For myself," adds that wonderful man, "if my faith in this point had no imperfection, if I did as verily believe the glory to come as I do believe that the sun will rise again when it is set, oh, how would it raise my desires and my joys! What haste would I make! How serious should I be! How should I trample on these earthly vanities, and even forget the things below! How restless should I be till I was assured of the heavenly rest; and then how restless till I did possess it! How should I delight in the thoughts of death, and my heart leap at the tidings of his approach!"

If such a knowledge of the evidences of revelation be of importance to the healthy state of the Christian life generally, it is absolutely necessary to the discharge of that particular function of it of which we are speaking. How can a Christian, with very limited and confused ideas on this subject, give a reason for his hope, or defend it? It is, then, of great importance that Christians should not satisfy themselves with any confidence or persuasion unless they have such clear and rational grounds thereof, as do not only convince themselves, but admit of being stated in a distinct manner to others.

If we would "be ready to give an answer to every one that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us," we must attend to the wise man's declaration, "The heart of the wise *studieth* to answer."¹ We must give ourselves to reading, we must meditate on these things, and thus lay up in store what we may turn to account when called on to state and defend our hope. To be ready for the discharge of this duty, we must further habitually seek and cherish the influence of the good Spirit, who is the author of faith and

¹ Prov. xv. 28.

hope; who takes the things of Christ and shows them to us; who brings truth seasonably to remembrance; and who was “a mouth and wisdom” to the primitive Christians, when called to state and defend their hope. He who has his mind full of truth and its evidence, and his heart filled with humble, confiding dependence on the teaching and guidance of the good Spirit; he whose habitual prayer is, “Uphold me according to thy word, and let me not be ashamed of my hope;”¹ he, he alone, is “always ready” to discharge the duty here enjoined in a manner creditable to his religion, calculated to convince the candid, and to “put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.” Such a man, if called to it, will “speak of God’s testimonies before kings, and not be ashamed.”²

It only remains that a word or two be said respecting the manner in which this duty to our religion and its Author, and to our fellow-men, is to be performed. Christians are to “give an answer to those who ask them a reason of the faith that is in them with meekness and fear.”³

The truth is to be stated and defended in its own spirit—the spirit not only “of power,” but “of love;” not only of a “sound mind,” but of a tender heart. The conduct of those who call them to give an account of their faith may be, often has been, most unreasonable and provoking. But the Christian confessor must possess his soul in patience. “The servant of the Lord must not strive, but in meekness instruct those who oppose themselves,” “showing all meekness to all men.”⁴ “He must not bluster and fly into

¹ Ps. cxix. 116.

² Ps. cxix. 46.

³ “*Meekness* towards those who give occasions for entering into the defence of our religion; and *fear*, not of them, but of God—that reverential fear which the nature of religion requires, and which is so far from being inconsistent with, that it will inspire proper courage towards men.”—BISHOP BUTLER: *Charge*.

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 25; Tit. iii. 2.

invectives, because he has the better of it, against any man who questions him of his hope, as some think themselves authorized to use rough speech because they plead for truth. On the contrary, so much the rather should he study meekness for the glory and advantage of the truth. It needs not the service of passion; yea, nothing so disserves it as passion when set to serve it. The spirit of truth is withal the spirit of meekness—the dove that rested on that great champion of truth, who is truth itself; and this spirit is from him derived to the lovers of truth, and they ought to seek the participation of it. Imprudence, want of meekness, rashness, or harshness, makes some kind of Christians lose much of their labour in speaking for religion, and drives those further off whom they would draw into it.”¹

The pleader for religion cannot be too earnest; but it must be the earnestness of conviction as to the truth, the earnestness of compassion as to those who oppose it. As an able writer says, “His voice may well falter from emotion; but it must not be the emotion of anger. Energy may give emphasis to his words, and cause them to vibrate, but passion never.”²

This duty is to be performed not only with meekness, but “with fear;” that is not, as some have supposed, with due respect to the heathen magistrates before whom Christians were called to defend their hope; but with religious reverence, with holy fear, with a sense of the infinite importance of the subject, and its close connection with the eternal interests both of those who question and of him who answers. “Divine things ought never to be spoken in a light, perfunctory way, but with a reverent, grave temper of spirit; and for this reason some choice should be made (when we have it in our power) of time and persons. The confidence that is in this hope makes the believer not fear

¹ Leighton.

² Vinet.

men to whom he answers ; but still he fears God, for whom he answers, and whose interest is chief in the things he speaks of. The soul that has the deepest sense of spiritual things, and knowledge of God, is most afraid to miscarry in speaking of him ; most tender and wary how to acquit itself when engaged to speak of and for God.”¹ There is something very shocking in an irreverent defence of the solemn verities of the Christian revelation. It almost necessarily induces a suspicion of the depth, if not of the reality, of the conviction of the apologist. The man who regards as real the glorious objects of the Christian hope, must be filled with a heartfelt joy and a solemn awe, both equally incompatible with every approach to irreverence. He will rejoice, but he will “rejoice with trembling.”

Thus have I endeavoured briefly to illustrate this interesting passage. Of the mode of conduct which it recommends, we have a fine specimen in the conduct of the Apostles Peter and John before the Jewish Sanhedrim, as recorded in the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and of the Apostle Paul in his defence of himself before Festus and King Agrippa. What clear statements, what powerful reasons, what a readiness in giving them, what meekness, what fear, characterize their speeches ! How well fitted were they to compel respect both for the cause and its advocates, even from the most prejudiced judges !

I cannot conclude this part of the discourse without calling on all my hearers seriously to examine whether they have any hope in them in reference to eternity ; and whether the hope they have in them be the hope of the gospel. There are not a few who have no hope with regard to eternity. They have no faith, no solid belief, on such subjects, and therefore they can have no hope. Others

¹ Leighton.

have a kind of faith as to eternity, of which they would very willingly get rid ; but it is a faith which produces, not the hope which gives peace, but the fear that has torment. Others have hope, it may be strong hope ; but they can give no satisfactory reason for their hope. It rests on no solid basis, but on false views of God and of themselves. If you have no hope for eternity, be assured you have not believed the gospel ; and if your hope rests on anything but the free grace of God, manifested in consistency with his justice in the atonement of Christ, apprehended by you in the faith of the truth of the gospel, be assured that that hope will fail you in the day of trial, and make you "ashamed and confounded, world without end."

How sad is it to think that so many are without hope, so many without good hope ; while there is hope, good hope, set before every sinner to whom the gospel comes ! "This is a faithful saying, that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. He came to save sinners, even the chief. He is able to save to the uttermost all coming to God by him. Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life." This is the very truth most sure. This great salvation was spoken to us by the Son of God, and has been confirmed to us by them who heard him ; and God has given witness to it by divers signs, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will, and especially by raising Christ from the dead, and giving him glory, that our faith and hope might be in him.¹

Let those who, through the faith of this truth, have hope, good hope, in them, prove its reality by purifying themselves as he in whom they hope is pure ; and let them seek

¹ 1 Tim. i. 15 ; 2 Cor. v. 19 ; 1 John i. 7 ; Heb. vii. 25 ; John iii. 16 ; Heb. ii. 4 ; 1 Pet. i. 21.

to grow in hope that they may grow in holiness ; and seek to grow in holiness that they may grow in hope ; and seek to grow in faith that they may grow both in hope and holiness. Let them “show all diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end : that they be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” Let them prove themselves to be the family of Christ, by “holding fast the confidence and rejoicing of their hope stedfast to the end.” Let them hold forth the word of life, the ground of their hope, in a meek and reverent confession of the truth, and attest and adorn that confession by “a conversation becoming the gospel”—a holy, happy, useful life. Let them “not cast away their confidence, which has great recompense of reward.” Let them persevere in faith and hope and holiness ; that, “after having done the will of God, they may receive the promise.”¹

It is but a little while, and faith shall be converted into vision, hope into enjoyment ; that which is in part shall pass away, and that which is perfect shall take its place. They who are “looking for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of him who is the great God and our Saviour,” shall not look in vain. “He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” Meanwhile let us live by faith ; let us persevere in the belief and profession and practice of the truth ; knowing that, “if any man turn back, God’s soul has no pleasure in him.” Oh, may all of us, who profess to have the faith and hope of the gospel in us, be found at last, not among “them who draw back unto perdition, but among them who believe to the saving of the soul.”²

¹ Heb. vi. 11, 12, iii. 6, x. 35, 36.

² Heb. x. 37-39.

§ 4. *Maintaining “a good conscience” and “a good conversation.”*

It only remains to consider the last injunction laid on Christians as exposed to persecution. They are exhorted to “have a good conscience; that, whereas they spoke evil of them, as of evil-doers, they might be ashamed who falsely accused their good conversation in Christ.” In the remaining part of the discourse, I shall first inquire what the apostle calls on the calumniated Christians to do; and second, why he requires them to do this. He requires them to do two things: the one in express terms; the other by necessary implication. He requires them to “have,” or hold, “a good conscience,” and to maintain “a good conversation,” in Christ; and he requires them to do this, that their calumniators may be made ashamed of their false accusations.

In considering the first part of our subject, I shall, in succession, endeavour to explain to you what it is to have a good conscience, and what it is to maintain a good conversation in Christ; and then show how these are mutually connected, how they act and react on each other.

There are few subjects on which more has been written and spoken to little or no, or worse than no purpose, than conscience. “Here,” as Leighton justly says, “are many fruitless, verbal debates; and, as in other things that most require solid and useful consideration, the vain mind of man feedeth on the wind, and loves to be busy to no purpose. How much better is it to have the good conscience than dispute about its nature; to experience its power than to understand its definition!” Yet it is very desirable that we should have distinct and accurate ideas on this subject. If we do not know what conscience is, how can we understand what is meant by a good conscience? and if we do

not know what a good conscience is, how can we employ the appropriate means of obtaining it if we are destitute of it, or of retaining it if we are so happy as already to possess it?

Conscience may be described as that part of our mental constitution which makes us the proper subjects of religious and moral obligation and responsibility; or, in other words, the human mind in its relations to God and duty. It is a part of the constitution of man, that as he makes, and cannot but make, a distinction between propositions as true and false, so he makes, and cannot but make, a distinction between dispositions and actions as right and wrong; and as he cannot but count what he thinks to be true to be worthy of belief, and what he thinks to be false to be worthy of disbelief, so he cannot but count what he thinks right worthy of approbation and reward, and what he thinks wrong worthy of disapprobation and punishment; and he cannot do what he knows to be right without the pleasurable feeling of self-approbation, nor can he do what he knows to be wrong without the painful feeling of self-disapprobation. These seem to be the acts of states of the mind to which we give the general name of conscience. It is, as the apostle expresses it, the having "the work," the office¹ of law so "written in the heart," so inwoven into his nature, as that without a written law he is as a law to himself, his thoughts accusing or excusing one another. It seems to be this part of our constitution to which Solomon refers, when he says, that "the spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly." It is this peculiar endowment of the human soul more than anything else, more than all things else taken together, that raises it above the animating principle of the brutes.²

¹ Τὰ τοῦ νόμου. Τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου.—Rom. ii. 14, 15.

² See Bishop Butler's *Three Sermons on Human Nature*—the most valuable treatise on the philosophy of morals in existence.

The conscience is good when the mind exercises all the functions referred to, in a way fitted to promote the religious and moral excellence, the holiness and the happiness, both of the individual and of all with whom he is connected. It is absolutely good when it gains this end in the highest degree; and it is good or evil just in the degree in which it gains these ends, or comes short of them, or conduces to ends of an opposite kind.

Man, when he came from the hand of his Creator, was, as a being possessed of conscience, as in every other view that can be taken of his nature, very good. He had a good conscience. He clearly perceived what was right, and strongly felt what was good. He thought, and felt, and acted, in entire coincidence with his convictions of right. His heart condemned him not, and he had confidence towards God, arising from the consciousness that, in mind and heart, he was entirely conformed to His will.

Had this state of things continued, sin and misery had never been known; and in a growing acquaintance with what is holy, just, and good, and a corresponding disposition to conform himself in all the faculties of his nature to it, a foundation was laid for illimitable progress in moral excellence and happiness.

But man's conscience became evil, and "that which was ordained to life became death"—the fruitful source both of sin and of misery. The conscience, under malignant spiritual influence, became evil, morally depraved, hesitating in a case where there was no room for hesitation; doubting as to the absolute authority of a distinctly uttered announcement of the mind of God, and as to the necessary connection between sin and punishment. Had conscience maintained its superiority over desire, Satan might have tempted, but man would not have fallen. But conscience betrayed its trust, and delivered man up to the influence of curiosity

and ambition, inflamed by the false representations of the great deceiver; and no sooner had he, yielding to temptation, violated the divine law, than, incapable of changing its nature, the inward witness and judge instantly became evil, in the sense of being productive of misery. It having first deceived him, then slew him. It repeated the declaration of the Lawgiver in a most terrific form: "Thou hast eaten, thou must die: thou art a sinner, thou art miserable." It filled him with remorse and the fear which has torment; and made him flee from what had been the source of his happiness, but now was the object of his terror—"the presence of the Lord."¹

Man, the sinner, is exposed, under the penal arrangements of the divine government, to the operation of causes both of depravity and of wretchedness without himself; but the principal sources both of his ever-growing sin and misery are within himself, in his own depraved nature. He is his own perverter and his own tormentor. All the faculties of his nature have become "instruments of unrighteousness unto sin;" and they all, too, "bring forth fruit unto death." All his faculties, originally good, are now evil: evil—influenced by depravity; evil—productive of misery. Conscience, the master faculty, is thus emphatically evil.

Conscience, influenced by ignorance and error and cri-

¹ Prima est hæc ultio, quod se
Judice, nemo nocens absolvitur. . . .

Cur tamen hos tu
Evasisse putes, quos diri conscia facti
Mens habet attonitos et surdo verbere cædit
Occultum quatiente animo tortore flagellum?
Pœna autem vehemens, ac multo sævior illis
Quas et Cædicius gravis invenit, aut Rhadamanthus,
Nocte dieque suum gestare in pectore testem.

—JUVENAL, xiii.

minal inclination, pronounces false judgments; calls evil good, and good evil; and says "Peace, peace, where there is no peace." It approves what it should condemn, and condemns what it should approve. It is fitful and uncertain, and inconsistent and unreasonable; sometimes, at the same time it may be, reproving and punishing severely for the neglect of some superstitious usage, and permitting, or even enjoining, the perpetration of the greatest crimes. It is sometimes absurdly and most vexatiously sensitive and scrupulous, and at other times "seared as with a hot iron." This is the very core of man's depravity and wretchedness. When the mind and the conscience are defiled, nothing can be pure. When the light which is in man is darkness, "how great is that darkness!"

Even when conscience, in the unchanged, unpardoned sinner, performs its most legitimate function, *condemnation*, it is *evil*,—productive of depravity as well as of misery. Its condemnation irritates, instead of destroying or even weakening, the sinful principle which is condemned. It awakens into more exasperated fury, enmity against Him who forbids and who punishes what the sinner loves. It makes the sinner "run, as it were, on the Almighty's neck, on the thick bosses of his buckler;" or, paralyzing the sinews of dutiful exertion, makes him say there is no hope, and yield himself up an unresisting victim to the powers of evil. And the most fearful scenes of suffering that are witnessed on this side death, out of the prison-house from which there is no discharge, are those which originate in the inflictions of a guilty, awakened, unenlightened conscience. This is the most adequate representation we can have of "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that cannot be quenched."

Behold a picture drawn from the life, of a sinner conscience-struck:—

“ Alas! how changed! Expressive of his mind,
His eyes are sunk, arms folded, head reclined.
Those awful syllables—hell, death, and sin!
Though whisper'd, plainly tell what works within:
That conscience there performs her proper part,
And writes a doomsday sentence on his heart.
Forsaking and forsaken of all friends,
He now perceives where earthly pleasure ends.
Hard task for one who lately knew no care;
And harder still, as learned beneath despair!
His hours no longer pass unmark'd away—
A dark importance saddens every day:
He hears the notice of the clock, perplexed,
And cries—Eternity perhaps comes next!
Sweet music is no longer music here,
And laughter sounds like madness in his ear;
His grief the world of all her powers disarms—
Wine has no taste, and beauty has no charms.”¹

Out of this darkness God can bring light; but its natural consummation is “the blackness of darkness for ever.”

The question is a most important one, How is conscience in man, the sinner, to become good, the source of holiness and happiness, a well of living water in him, springing up unto everlasting life? The true answer is, the conscience must be brought under the saving operation of “the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” It must be sprinkled by the blood of his atoning sacrifice; it must be enlightened by his word; it must be influenced by his Spirit. It is thus, thus alone, that any sinner can have a good conscience.

“The blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God, purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God.”² The heart is thus “sprinkled from an evil conscience.” The evil conscience becomes good. The sprinkling of the blood

¹ Cowper.

² Heb. ix. 14.

of the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the conscience of the sinner makes it clean, “good;” converts it from a source of misery and sin into a source of peace and of holiness. But what is meant by this sprinkling of the blood of Christ on the heart or conscience; and how does it produce such wonderful, such delightful results? The best way of answering the first of these interesting questions is, perhaps, by asking another. The sprinkling of the blood of the sin-offering was necessary, in order to its being effectual to the removal of the guilt of those for whom it was offered. What, in the Christian economy of redemption, answers to this part of “the patterns of the heavenly things?”¹ There can be but one reply: the faith of the truth respecting the atoning sacrifice of Christ, produced by the Holy Spirit. It is this which brings home the saving results of the atonement to the individual sinner.

Now, how does this faith of the truth respecting Christ as the great atonement deliver from the evil conscience, and bring us under the power of a good conscience? Till this truth is understood and believed, conscience condemns, cannot but condemn, the sinner, and produce in his mind and heart the natural consequences of this condemnation, fear and dislike of God. But when, in the faith of the truth, conscience sees God setting forth his Son a propitiation in his blood, and hears him declaring that he is the Lamb of God, who has borne, and borne away, the sin of the world; who, though he knew no sin, has been made sin for men, wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities; and who thus has magnified the law and made it honourable, and brought in an everlasting righteousness; and that He, the righteous Judge, is well pleased for that righteousness’ sake, and while the just God is the Saviour, “just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus;”—

¹ Heb. ix. 23. ἡ προδείγματα τῶν ἐπουρανίων.

conscience, seeing and hearing all this, and echoing as formerly the voice of God, proclaims, "It is finished : " God is satisfied, and so am I ; he justifies, and I absolve : "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus."¹ Believing in him, thou art justified from all things, accepted in the Beloved. Thy sin is more condemned than ever through his flesh ; but thou, thou art justified. Who shall lay anything to thy charge ? God justifies ; who shall condemn ? Christ has died, the just in the room of the unjust.

And as the condemning conscience naturally filled the mind with dislike and fear of God ; so the absolving, the justifying conscience casts out the jealousies of unforgiven guilt, fills the heart with confidence and love, fitting the man to yield a living service to the living God. In this way, in this way alone, can the conscience of man be made good, or kept good, by bringing it and keeping it under the pacifying, purifying power of the blood of atonement.

This is indeed "a good conscience." It makes its possessor at once happy and holy. Let him who has heard its testimony, tell how it does so :

" 'Tis Heaven, all Heaven, descending on the wings
Of the glad legions of the King of kings :
'Tis more ; 'tis God, diffused in every part,
'Tis God himself, triumphant in the heart." ²

The conscience that is thus sprinkled by Christ's blood is enlightened by Christ's truth. The Christian is "not unwise, but understands what the will of the Lord is." His conscience is not a blind impulse. Regulating him, it is itself regulated by "the perfect law of liberty," "the good, and perfect, and acceptable will of the Lord." It is

¹ Rom. viii. 1.

² Cowper.

not guided in its decisions by his own caprice, or his own reason, or the opinions of other men; but by "what is good, by what the Lord hath required."

And while sprinkled by the blood of Christ's sacrifice, and enlightened by the truth of Christ's law, it is guided in its operation by the influence of Christ's Spirit. He enables it wisely and honestly to make the precepts and motives of the Christian law bear on the varying circumstances of the Christian's inner and outer life: on his transactions with God, and his transactions with men. A conscience which allows its possessor no quiet of mind, while known duty is neglected or known sin is indulged, and makes him habitually feel the need of repairing to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness, and at once inclines and enables him to "walk at liberty," while he keeps God's law, and to "serve God without fear, in righteousness and holiness, all the days of his life,"¹ is the good conscience, to possess which is one of the Christian's highest privileges, and to maintain and improve which is one of his principal duties.

It is but right, however, before closing this part of the subject, to remark, that the phrase "a good conscience" is sometimes used in the New Testament in a more restricted sense, to signify that state of the mind when the conscience bears witness "in the Holy Ghost" to the individual, that his conduct in any particular case is in accordance with what he knows and believes to be the will of God: an approving conscience. To this the apostle refers when he says, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not by fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world;" and again, "Herein do I exercise myself to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and towards

¹ Ps. cxix. 44, 45; Luke i. 74, 75.

man ;” and again, “ Pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience, willing in all things to live honestly.”¹ The question whether the apostle here uses the phrase in its more extended or more restricted sense, will meet us before we close the discourse.

Having thus illustrated the apostle’s express injunction, to have a good conscience, I must pass more lightly over his implied one, to maintain a good conversation in Christ. The word “ conversation” here, as uniformly in its biblical sense, does not mean, as in common usage, colloquial intercourse, but character and conduct, disposition and behaviour. Conversation in Christ is Christian character and conduct ; though, when the phrase “ in Christ” is used, as it very often is in this way, as equivalent to an adjective, it has a great deal more meaning than we commonly attach to the word Christian. A conversation in Christ, is such a frame of disposition and tenor of conduct, as becomes persons who are placed in a relation so close to Jesus Christ, that all the most intimate unions known among men are employed to shadow forth its closeness. They are in him as the branches are in the vine, and the members in the body ; they are so in him as that they died, and were buried, and rose again, in his death, burial, and resurrection ; so one with him as that what he did was considered as done by them, and what he deserved is bestowed on them ; so one with him as that his Father is their Father, his God their God, and his inheritance their inheritance ; they are animated by his Spirit, having the same mind in them that was in him ; thinking as he did, willing as he did, feeling as he did, choosing as he did ; they acknowledge him as their one Teacher, Saviour, and Lord ; they are “ under law” in religious matters to him, to him alone ; they are “ in the world as he was in the world,” his animated images,

¹ 2 Cor. i. 12 ; Acts xxiv. 16 ; Heb. xiii. 18.

his "living epistles, seen and read of all men." Such a character and conduct must have in them something very peculiar.

There are men calling themselves Christians, and who would not be very well pleased with any one who questioned their right to that appellation, who think, feel, and act just as if there never had been such a person as Jesus Christ, and whose life is anything rather than "a life by the faith of the Son of God." Their conversation is not in Christ; his sacrifice is not the ground of their hope; his Spirit not the source of light, and life, and energy, and peace, and joy to them; his law is not the rule of their duty; his example not the pattern of their imitation; his authority and grace not their motives to duty; his glory not the end of their conduct. In a word, their conversation is not "such as becomes the gospel of Jesus Christ."

The maintenance of such "a conversation in Christ" ought to be a main object with every Christian. He must habitually endeavour to comply with the exhortation of Leighton, "Seek this as the only way to have thy soul and thy ways righted: to be in Christ, and then to walk in him. Let thy conversation be in Christ. Study him, and follow him. Look on his way, in his graces, his obedience, humility, and meekness, till, looking on them, they make the very idea of thee new, as the painter doth of a face he would draw to the life. So behold his glory, that thou mayest be transformed from glory to glory; but, as it is there added, this must be 'by the Spirit of the Lord.' Do not, therefore, simply look on him as an example without thee, but a life within thee. Having received him, walk not only like him, but in him. Let your conversation be not only according to him, but in him;" animated by his Spirit as well as regulated by his law.

Such a Christian conversation will of necessity be "a

good conversation." It is to "walk as He also walked;" the "holy, harmless" One; "separate from sinners;" "who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" "who went about doing good."¹ A conversation in Christ must, just because it is a conversation in Christ, include in it every species, every degree of excellence.

The apostle had obviously a particular purpose to serve, in giving this epithet to the Christian conversation which he intimates is expected from those to whom he wrote. It suggests the thought, 'If you Christians were characterized by an evil conversation, then not they who speak of you as evil-doers, but you, would have cause to be ashamed; but if your conversation be the good conversation, which it must be if it be a conversation in Christ, then the reality in your character and conduct will so strikingly, so grotesquely, contrast with their calumnious misrepresentations, they will be so plainly in the wrong, that they must be shamed into silence.'

The mutual relation of the apostle's two injunctions—the one express, relating to a good conscience; and the other implied, relating to a good conversation—requires now to be attended to. The relation is different, according as you consider the good conscience as bearing the wide or the more limited sense in which I explained the phrase in the preceding part of the discourse.

If you understand it in the wide sense, then the good conversation is the result of the good conscience; and the exhortation is, 'Hold a good conscience, that you may maintain a good conversation in Christ.' Seek to have your conscience habitually sprinkled by Christ's blood, enlightened by Christ's truth, influenced by Christ's Spirit, that you may exemplify all the graces of the Christian character, and perform all the duties of the Christian life.

¹ 1 John ii. 6; Heb. vii. 26; 1 Pet. ii. 22; Acts x. 38.

In this view, the words embody one of the most important maxims of practical religion.

If, on the other hand, you understand having or holding a good conscience to mean, seeking to maintain the approving smile of our own mind in a consistency with the truth of the case, then the good conscience is the result of the good conversation; and the exhortation is, 'Let your temper and behaviour as Christians be habitually such, as that, whatever calumniators may say, you shall have the approving testimony of "the man within the breast;" that you shall have "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men."' This is another important maxim of practical religion.

The conversation cannot be made good but by having the conscience made good. The conscience cannot be kept good but by the conversation being kept good. To attempt, as some do, to get the conversation good, while the conscience is not good, is "to be still putting the handle of the clock right with your finger, which is a continual business, and does no good."¹ And to try, as others do, while not maintaining a good conversation, to keep a good opinion of themselves, and think this the testimony of a good conscience, by cherishing antinomian dogmas, mystical dreams, or enthusiastic raptures, is like a person attempting by the use of narcotic medicines to preserve peace of mind, when, through indolence and mismanagement, his affairs are in disorder, and ruin is at hand, and poverty about to come on him as an armed man.

The particular object for which the apostle addresses these injunctions to the persecuted Christians comes now shortly to be noticed. Have a good conscience and a good conversation in Christ, "that they who speak evil of you as evil-doers, and accuse you, may be ashamed."

¹ Leighton.

Christians cannot gratify their calumniators more than by being induced, under the irritating influence of their false accusations, to do anything inconsistent with a good conversation in Christ, which would, of course, interfere with the testimony of a good conscience. Even the slightest deviation of a Christian, not only from what is right in the estimation of a lax worldly morality, but from what is right according to the principles of spiritual Christianity, gives countenance to the slanders, and enables their authors to say, 'You see he is not what his profession requires him to be; and he only needs to be better known to be found out to be, indeed, the very bad person we represent him.'

On the other hand, uniform, consistent good conduct, as it is often the only, so it is always in the long run the most effectual, method of putting down calumny, and putting to shame calumniators. "A lying tongue is but for a moment."¹ Men cannot continue to believe without evidence, and in opposition to evidence. A uniform course of Christian behaviour secures, that if the accusations are taken up and inquired into, they will be found not true. They will be found to be not even plausible; they will be found to be false, entirely false, obviously, malignantly false. Such was the result in the case of our Lord, when the attempt was made to substantiate the calumnies of his enemies. "I find no fault in him," said a judge certainly by no means predisposed in his favour. And such, too, was the result in the case of Paul, when he was spoken evil of as an evil-doer, and falsely accused. Claudius Lysias, the Roman commander, after inquiry, declared that, notwithstanding all the calumnies of his enemies, he had done nothing worthy of death or of bonds; and Festus the governor, and King Agrippa, came to the same conclusion; thus covering his calumniators with shame. Even where

¹ Prov. xii. 19.

no formal investigation of calumnies takes place, a blameless holy life effectually refutes them.

When our hope is called in question, in all ordinary cases we should defend it; but defend it with meekness and fear. Silence in such a case is often, is usually, injustice to truth. But when our character is calumniated, in very many instances it is the wisest course to allow it to vindicate itself. In such a case, to use Archbishop Leighton's beautiful figure, "the integrity of a Christian conquers, as a rock unremoved breaks the waters that are dashing against it. This is not only a lawful, but a laudable way of revenge; shaming calumny out of its malignant lies; punishing evil-speakers by well-doing; showing by facts, not words, how false is the accusation brought against us." This is the most effectual apology, the most triumphant refutation. It is like the reply which was given to the sophist, who denied the possibility of motion, and fortified his denial by many very ingenious reasons. His antagonist, without speaking a word, rose and walked. The most elaborate refutation would not more satisfactorily have exposed the absurdity, or so effectually have put the sophist to shame.

It is also a very weighty consideration, that without this good conscience and conversation, any defence we can make of our religion is not likely to have much influence. One unchristian action on the part of a professor of Christianity, will cast more discredit on his religion than the largest and best-framed speeches in its behalf can compensate. Religion has never permanently suffered from calumnies cast on consistently religious men; and the objects of such calumnies have seldom been permanent sufferers. When they "trust in the Lord and do good," when they "delight themselves in him," and "commit their way to him," he often, in a manner that amazes themselves and confounds

their enemies, "brings forth their righteousness as the light, and their judgment as the noon-day."¹

The apostle closes his exhortations to Christians under persecution, by directing their attention to a view of affliction calculated at once to afford support and direction, consolation and guidance: "For it is better, if the will of God be so," or since it is the will of the Lord, "that ye suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing;" literally, "that ye suffer as well-doers rather than evil-doers."²

These words do not seem to have any peculiarly close connection with the verse which immediately precedes them. They are connected with the whole paragraph, occupied as it is with an account of the duties of Christians exposed to persecution. The force of the connective particle seems to be, 'You ought to submit to suffering, and you ought to act in this manner under suffering; "for it is better, since such is the will of God, to suffer; and it is better to suffer doing well than doing evil."'

It is better, since such is the will of God, that Christians should suffer. Suffering is not in itself desirable. Abstractly considered, it is not better to suffer than not to suffer. But, taking into consideration the whole circumstances of the case, it is much better that Christians should suffer than that they should not suffer. "It is needful" that they be "in heaviness through manifold trials."³ A life of ease would not be the suitable means of forming them to that character which is essential to their complete and final happiness. They all are made to see this in a good measure; and to say, "It has been good for me that

¹ Ps. xxxvii. 3-6.

² Κριττον γὰρ ἀγαθοποιῶντας (εἰ θέλει τὸ θέλημα Θεοῦ) πάσχειν, ἢ κακοποιῶντας.

³ 1 Pet. i. 6.

I have been afflicted. I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.”¹ The occurrence of the affliction is proof enough that it is the “will of the Lord.” “Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?”² Every affliction “comes forth from him who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working.” And the undoubted fact, that these sufferings are the will of God, is to Christians undoubted evidence that it is better for them to suffer. For does not God love them? is he not infinitely wise? has he not promised to give them what is good, and to make all things work together for their good? Whatever, then, may be the form, whatever the degree, whatever the continuance of the affliction, there can be no reasonable doubt that this is the will of God concerning us; and as little doubt that that will is good. Nature may, nature often does, say, ‘It were better that I did not suffer;’ but faith reproves nature, and bids reason school her into a better mind. ‘It is the will of the Lord that I suffer, that I suffer thus; and can anything be better, better for me, than the will of my Father in heaven, my almighty, all-wise, infinitely righteous, infinitely benignant, unchanging Friend?’

There is to every rational being a strong argument for submission under affliction, in the sentiment, ‘Such is the will of God.’ For “what is, what can be, gained by our reluctances and repinings, but pain to ourselves? He doth what he wills, whether we consent or no. Our disagreeing doth not prejudice his purpose, but our peace. If we will not be led, we must be drawn; we must suffer if he will: but if we will what he wills, even in suffering that makes it sweet and easy when our mind goes along with his, and we willingly move with the stream of providence, which will carry us with it, though we row against it, and we still have

¹ Ps. cxix. 71, 75.

² Amos iii. 6.

nothing but toil and weariness for our pains. And why should we not will what he wills, when we know this is his will, even our sanctification, our salvation; and that when he wills our sufferings, he wills them in order to these?"¹

But the words before us not only intimate that it is better, since such is the will of God, that Christians suffer, but it is better that they suffer doing well than doing evil. The sentiment which our translation brings out of the words is a just one, "It is better to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing." 'Take heed,' as if he had said, 'that your enemies never have occasion to punish you for real crimes; "let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters"—that would be disgraceful to yourselves, disgraceful to your cause; but if any man suffer as a Christian, for righteousness' sake, because he will not deny his Lord or renounce his faith, "let him not be ashamed." It is far better to suffer in this last way than in the first way. Your characters will be improved, your religion will be honoured, by such sufferings. The other sort of suffering is calculated to disgrace both.'²

At the same time, the words do seem naturally to express a somewhat different and an equally important and appropriate sentiment. It is better to suffer the trials to which as Christians you are exposed, doing well than doing evil. It is better to bear them in a right spirit than in a wrong spirit; to act properly under them than to act improperly. It is better, for example, that you should for injury and insult render blessing, than that you should resentfully retaliate; better that you should entirely rise above the fears of your adversary, than in any degree sink under

¹ Leighton.

² "It is inconsiderately said by many, 'If I had deserved such usage, I could have borne it:' as if suffering without sin were not a lighter burden than sin and suffering for it."—BAXTER.

them ; better that you should meekly and piously meet the demands of your enemies for an account of your faith, than manifest either cowardice in shrinking from, or bad temper in conducting, your defence ; better quietly live down the calumnies of your enemies, than be hurried by resentment of them into anything inconsistent with the holding a good conscience, or maintaining a good conversation. It is not enough that Christians, when they suffer, should suffer, not for doing ill, but for doing well ; but further, that they should do well, and not do ill, in suffering. They should be good sufferers in a good cause. It is not the mere suffering that is to do us good ; it is the manner in which we think, and feel, and act under suffering. It is much better, when called to suffer, to suffer in the manner the apostle recommends, than in an opposite way. How much more comfortable, how much more advantageous to ourselves, how much more honourable to God, how much more creditable to religion, to bear the afflictions laid on us, especially those which come in the form of persecution, in a quiet, resigned, pious, cheerful, humble, patient, meek spirit, than in a different, than in an opposite temper ! “ Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him, in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” Then will “ tribulations work patience, and experience, and hope, that makes not ashamed.” “ The chastisement,” though “ not for the present joyous, but grievous,” will yield “ the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them who are exercised thereby ;” and their “ light affliction, which is but for a moment, will work out for” them “ a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.”¹

I cannot conclude without taking notice of the illustra-

¹ Rom. v. 3, 5 ; Heb. xii. 11 ; 2 Cor. iv. 17.

tion which the subject of discourse gives, of what Tertullian calls "the adorable fulness of the Holy Scriptures." They are indeed full, full to an overflow, of the mind and spirit of Christ, of light and love, of truth and grace. All that man needs to know in reference to his relations to God and eternity, to make him wise, and good, and happy, is to be found there. There is no question respecting the divine character and government, the solution of which is necessary to human duty or happiness, which is not there satisfactorily settled; and, amid the immense variety of circumstances in which a human being may be placed, there is not one situation to which there is not to be found, in the Holy Scriptures, appropriate warning, direction, or consolation. Their fulness, as a practical directory, must often have struck with wonder and awe, as well as gratitude and delight, the intelligent Christian. When the ear of his mind is opened to discipline, the Holy Spirit, bringing to remembrance his own oracles, makes him often in the hour of perplexity, in a way which astonishes himself, hear as it were a word behind him, "This is the way, walk in it." Not merely are there to be found in them wide-reaching principles of duty, which admit of easy application to an endless number and variety of particular cases, but there are comparatively few combinations of circumstances, even the most extraordinary, in which the diligent, humble, pious student of the Scriptures will not find himself furnished there with information and directions, as suited even to the minute peculiarities, or it may be, as he is apt to think it, the absolute singularities of his case, as if these had been immediately before the mind of the inspired writers. He is there taught how to employ all his faculties; how to regulate all his desires; how to behave himself to God and man, to relatives and strangers, to friend and enemy; in retirement and in society; in his own house and in the house of

God; in prosperity and in adversity; in youth, in middle life, and in old age; how to think and feel; how to speak and act; how to live and how to die. How so much particular, easily applicable, practical instruction, could, without any appearance of unnatural constraint, be brought within the compass of so moderate a sized volume as the Bible, is indeed extraordinary; and he who is best acquainted with that divine Book, and has been most in the habit of taking it as a "lamp to his feet and a light to his path," will be readiest to say with Tertullian, "I adore the fulness of the Holy Scriptures."

This train of thought is naturally suggested by observing how much varied, important, particular, readily available instruction, on the interesting subject of the duties of Christians when exposed to persecution on account of their religion, is crowded into the short paragraph with which the subject of this discourse concludes. We have here not a general exhortation to patience and constancy; but directions are given suited to the various forms which persecution might assume. Injuries and insults might be heaped on them: how were they to act in this case? They were not to "render evil for evil, but contrariwise, blessing." Prospects the most appalling might be presented to them for the purpose of shaking their faith: how were they to act in this case? They were not to be afraid of the terror of their enemies, neither were they to be troubled, but to "sanctify the Lord God in their hearts," as the object both of supreme fear and confidence. They might be called on publicly to state and defend the religion on which rested all their hopes: how were they to act in this case? They were to "be always ready to give an answer to every one who asked them a reason of the hope that was in them with meekness and fear." They might be exposed to a sort of attack from which it is peculiarly difficult to defend either

themselves or their cause—systematic calumnation; men might “speak evil of them, and falsely accuse them as evil-doers:” how were they to act in this case? They were to hold “a good conscience,” and to maintain “a good conversation in Christ.” And what a persecuted Christian must have found in this portion of Scripture, given by inspiration of God, every Christian, if he is but careful enough to search the Scriptures, will find in some portion of it that which is fitted to make him, as a “man of God, perfect, thoroughly furnished” for work and for warfare.

NOTE A. p. 317.

The present division of the Holy Scriptures into chapters and verses is not of divine origin, but is a human invention of comparatively late date, intended chiefly to facilitate reference to any particular portion of the sacred oracles. With the exception of the book of Psalms—the particular poems in which, as separate compositions, given forth at different times and on various occasions, were from the beginning divided from each other—all the books, both in the Old Testament and the New, were originally written as so many continued discourses; not only without paragraphs, but with the clauses, and even sentences, undivided by such notes as we call points, and the words themselves not separated by any sensible distance from each other.

The division first made of the Old Testament writings is considerably ancient; probably not much, if at all, posterior to the days of Ezra. The different books were divided into large paragraphs, and into verses; which last were, however, merely marked by a point, not numbered. This division was probably made for the convenience of their synagogue worship. Pure Hebrew, in which the Old Testament books are written, ceased to be the vernacular language of the Israelites after the Babylonian captivity. After the return from Babylon, when the

sacred writings were read in the synagogue, they were first read in the original, and then interpreted into the Chaldaic or Syro-Chaldaic dialect, which was commonly used by the people. To this mode of reading the Holy Scriptures, it is generally supposed there is a reference, Neh. viii. 8, where it is said that the Levites "read in the book, in the law of the Lord, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." As this was done period by period, it became necessary to adopt some notation to mark the beginning and end of the periods.

The division of the Bible into the chapters with which we are familiar, is comparatively a modern invention. It was made, about the middle of the thirteenth century, by a cardinal of the Roman Church, Hugo de St Caro, who formed the first concordance of the Latin Vulgate translation of the Scriptures, for the obvious purpose of facilitating reference to any particular word or passage. This division was adopted by a learned Jew, Rabbi Isaac Nathan, who, about the middle of the fifteenth century, published the first concordance of the Hebrew Scriptures; and, in addition, he numbered the verses into which the sacred text had been anciently divided.

About a century later, a learned French printer, Robert Stephens, divided the New Testament into verses; and his division, with few exceptions and with very slight variations, has been generally adopted in the editions of the original text, and in the translations of the Scriptures which have been since published throughout the Christian world.

This division of the sacred text is convenient for the purpose of reference; and, had it been always judiciously made and accommodated to the different kinds of composition of which the sacred books are made up, might have contributed materially to the more important purpose of interpretation. Like all human works, however, it bears abundant evidence of the imperfection of its authors, and has been productive of some bad as well as of some good consequences. The division, whether of chapters or of verses, is not always judicious: where there is no pause in the discourse, no division in the thoughts, we often find a division in the words; while, on the other hand, where the sense requires such a division, it is not always to be found.

To no part of the sacred writings does the division into chap-

ters and verses less happily apply, than to the epistolary writings of the New Testament. Both from their argumentative character and their epistolary form, it becomes almost impossible to break them down into such short sections as our verses, without materially impairing their beauty and obscuring their meaning. It would be a considerable help towards the understanding of the apostolical epistles, if the chapters and verses were merely marked on the margin, while the epistle itself was printed as a continuous discourse, broken down only into such paragraphs as it naturally resolves itself into ; and indeed we are persuaded nobody will ever make very satisfactory progress in the study of these most interesting portions of sacred writ, who does not get into the habit of reading them with an almost total disregard of the ordinary divisions.

We have an illustration of these remarks in the words which form the subject of the first division of the third part of this discourse. They form a part of a series of injunctions laid by the apostle on the Christians to whom he wrote, respecting their duty so to behave themselves towards their persecutors as that no discredit should be reflected either on their religion or themselves ; but that, on the contrary, the doctrine of God their Saviour might be adorned, and their adversaries have no evil thing to say with truth of its professors. The first injunction is, to abstain from all resentful retaliation, and to meet injury and reproach by kindness both in conduct and in language. This injunction is contained in the 9th verse ; and with the illustration and enforcement of this injunction, the apostle is engaged down to the middle of the 14th verse. Here there is a pause in the discourse, a division in the thought. He proceeds to a second injunction ; calling on them to guard against the undue influence of fear, and prescribing a due regard to God as the best means of preventing an undue regard to man. But you will notice there is in our common Bibles no division of the words here. You would suppose the second part of the verse just a following out the thought contained in the first ; when, in reality, it is what in a discourse we would call entering on the illustration of a new particular. And as we have here no division where the sense required one, so, at the close of the verse, we have a division where the sense requires there should be none : for the first

part of the 15th verse is just the conclusion of the sentence begun in the last part of the 14th,—a part, indeed, of the same quotation from an Old Testament writer. And then again a third and entirely distinct injunction is given in the remaining part of the 15th verse,—an injunction to be always ready to give an account of their religion, and its grounds, to all who should call them in question for them. Here again we have a distinct division in the thoughts, unmarked by any corresponding division in the words.

These may appear to some very minute and unimportant remarks, and comparatively they are so; but nothing should be considered as trifling or useless which goes to remove obscurity or pointlessness from an inspired declaration or precept; or to give it, even in a slight degree, additional clearness or force.

NOTE B. p. 318.

“*Observandum est, duo esse in Novo Testamento e veteri citationum genera. Quædam enim, imo pleraque omnia loca quæ e veteri proferuntur in Novo Testamento ejus modi sunt, ut, juxta mentem consilium et scopum Scriptoris ex quo depromuntur, adducantur ad doctrinæ evangelicæ confirmationem. Sed et alia sunt nonnulla in quibus a Novi Testamenti Scriptoribus, non tam spectatur mens consilium et scopus, quam Scriptoris verba duntaxat, quæ quoniam aliquam habent cum iis de quibus loquuntur similitudinem et significationis convenientiam, iis utuntur, non tanquam testimonio et auctoritate, qua velint dictum suum communire, sed per allusionem duntaxat. Cujus modi ferme sunt illa quæ vulgo Noemata seu Gnomas Rhetores vocant, dicta nimirum quædam sententiosa ex poeta aliquo—Virgilio puta vel Homero deprompta, quæ nos solemus ad rem et propositum nostrum accommodare, non quod hoc velimus, poetam idipsum spectasse et in animo habuisse quod nos cum ejus verba usurpamus, sed id grata quadam ‘accommodatione’ duntaxat a nobis fit, quod allusionibus libenter et impense soliti sint homines delectari.*”—Matt. xiii. 34; Ps. xlix. 2; Rom. x. 18; Ps. xix. 5; 2 Cor. viii. 15; Ex. xvi. 13.—L. CAPELLUS.

NOTE C. p. 328.

“Should the empress,” says Chrysostom, in his epistle to Cyriacus, “determine to banish me, let her banish me; ‘the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof.’ If she will cast me into the sea, let her cast me into the sea; I will remember Jonah. If she will throw me into a burning fiery furnace; the three children were there before me. If she will throw me to the wild beasts; I will remember that Daniel was in the den of lions. If she will condemn me to be stoned; I shall be the associate of Stephen, the proto-martyr. If she will have me beheaded; the Baptist has submitted to the same punishment. If she will take away my substance; ‘naked came I out of my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return to it.’”

DISCOURSE XVI.

THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST (THEIR NATURE—DESIGN—CONSEQUENCES) AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO CHRISTIANS SUFFERING FOR HIS CAUSE.

“For Christ also hath once suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject unto him.”—1 PET. iii. 18-22.

IN studying Christianity, as developed in the inspired writings of the New Testament, few things are more fitted to strike the mind than the intimate, the indissoluble connection which exists between its principles and its laws, its doctrinal statements and its practical requirements. Its doctrines are such as, if really believed, necessarily lead to the discharge of its duties; and its duties are such as cannot be discharged without a knowledge and belief of its doctrines. They are connected together as the two constituents of human nature, body and soul. The doctrines are embodied in the duties, and the duties are animated by the doctrines.¹

¹ “La religion chrétienne est toute d’une pièce. Elle ne présente pas sur deux lignes parallèles et distinctes des dogmes d’une part, et des devoirs de l’autre. Un lien spirituel réunit les uns avec les autres d’une manière inséparable, en sorte qu’il est également impossible de croire sans pratiquer, et de pratiquer sans croire.”—VINET.

This is true even of those doctrines which, at first view, seem to partake most of the nature of abstract principles; such as the doctrine of the expiation of human guilt, and the accomplishment of human salvation, through the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of the incarnate Son of God. This doctrine, which to many seems a point of mere speculation, having little or nothing to do with the formation of character or the guidance of conduct, is brought forward in the New Testament as the grand motive to Christian obedience generally, and to all the various parts of Christian obedience. . Are Christians exhorted to universal holiness? this is the motive, "Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." Are they exhorted to "walk in love?" the motive is, "Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour." Are they exhorted to mutual forgiveness? the motive is, "God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us." Are they exhorted to a complying, self-denying spirit? the motive is, "Christ pleased not himself." Are they exhorted to public spirit, in opposition to selfishness? the motive is drawn from "the mind which was in Christ," and which manifested itself in his emptying and abasing himself, in his labouring, and suffering, and dying for the salvation of men. Are they exhorted to make pecuniary sacrifices for the relief of their poor brethren? the motive is, "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus, in that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Are husbands urged to love their wives? the motive is, "Christ also loved the Church," his spouse, "and gave himself for her." And not to multiply examples, are Christians, in the passage which I have read as the subject of discourse, called on cheerfully and patiently to endure suffering in the cause of Christ? the motive is,

“Christ also once suffered for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, and quickened by the Spirit ; by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison ; which aforetime were disobedient : and having risen from the dead, is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God ; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him.”

In the immediate context, as you are aware, the apostle has been instructing those to whom he was writing how to behave themselves when exposed to persecution on account of the religion of Christ, so as to reflect honour on Him, on it, and on themselves ; and to reconcile them to such sufferings, and induce them to conduct themselves properly under them, he suggests the thought, that divinely appointed suffering in a good cause, rightly sustained, is not to be considered as an evil. “If ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye.” “It is better, since such is the will of God, that ye doing well suffer :” better not only that ye should suffer doing well, “rather than doing evil ;” but better in these circumstances that ye should suffer than ye should not suffer.

It is in illustration and proof of this principle, I apprehend, that the apostle introduces the example of our Lord, the Prince of sufferers. His sufferings were divinely appointed sufferings ; sufferings in the best of all causes ; sufferings sustained in the best possible manner ; and sufferings terminating in such a way, as very strikingly to show that divinely appointed suffering in a good cause, rightly sustained, is rather to be chosen and embraced as a good, than dreaded and shunned as an evil. Such seems to me the general import of the interesting paragraph I have read, excluding from consideration at present the 20th and 21st verses, which, being plainly parenthetical, may be left out without at all interrupting the train of thought, and which,

being involved in considerable difficulties, may with greater advantage be afterwards made a subject of separate examination.

In suffering "for righteousness' sake," you may well account yourselves happy. It is better, since such is the will of God, that you doing well should suffer; for *even*¹ (that is the force of the particle rendered *also*) the Lord Christ, all excellent and glorious as he is, even HE ONCE suffered, though now and henceforth he suffers no more—is completely and for ever exempt from suffering of every kind, in every degree, the ends of his sufferings being completely gained. He suffered, even to the death, "for sins;" not his own, for he had none, but for those of others; of course, then, by the will of God, the express appointment of the supreme Judge, "in the stead of sinners;" and he suffered doing well, being and appearing to be "the just One," though "in the room of the unjust." And these sufferings were for a most holy and benignant object, that he might restore sinful and miserable men to holiness and happiness by bringing them to God. These sufferings, though they ended in a most violent death (for he was put to death, or became dead "in the flesh," or bodily), led to a vivification, a quickening "in the Spirit," or spiritually, which manifested itself in his going and preaching to the spirits in prison, whatever that may mean, and to a bodily resurrection too, which was followed by ascension to heaven, where, in the nature in which he had endured so much suffering, he sits "at the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him." Is there not abundant reason here why Christians, the followers of that illustrious sufferer, the Captain of salvation, thus made perfect through suffering, when exposed to suffering for his sake, should count it all joy to be subjected to mani-

¹ Καί.

fold trials while he is conducting them to glory; should reckon themselves happy because they thus endure; should consider it better, since such is the will of God, that they doing well should suffer?

For the further illustration of this most interesting and instructive passage of Scripture, I shall call your attention, first, to the illustrious sufferer, "Christ the just One;" secondly, to his sufferings,—he suffered, suffered even to death; thirdly, to the nature of his sufferings,—they were penal, vicarious, expiatory, for sins, in the room of the unjust; fourthly, to the design of his sufferings,—to bring men to God; and fifthly, to the consequences of his sufferings,—“Being quickened in the Spirit, he went and preached to the spirits in prison; and having risen from the dead, he went into heaven, where he is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him.” After having illustrated under these heads the important principles contained in this passage, I shall endeavour to show how they are fitted to serve the purpose for which they are brought forward by the apostle: to reconcile Christians to suffering; to give them both support and direction under their sufferings.

I. THE SUFFERER.

Let us then, first, inquire into the import of the two descriptive appellations here given to the illustrious Sufferer. He is Christ, the just One.

§ 1. *Christ.*

First, He is Christ. This is not, strictly speaking, the proper name of Him who bears it. It is one of his official designations, and in this way stands in the same class as Mediator, Redeemer, Saviour. Jesus was his proper name;

and Jesus Christ, or rather Jesus the Christ, is not, like Simon Peter or John Mark, a double name, but, like John the Baptist or Herod the king, a proper name and a descriptive appellation conjoined. Christ is a Greek word,¹ corresponding in meaning to the Hebrew word Messiah, and the English word Anointed.

The Christ, then, is just the Anointed One. Anointing seems, from a very early period, to have been the emblem of consecration—the setting apart of a person or thing to a particular and sacred purpose;² and it appears that, among the Jews, consecration to the three sacred offices, the prophetic, priestly, and kingly, was indicated by anointing.³ In the Old Testament Scriptures, the great Deliverer, who had been promised almost immediately after man by his sin had brought himself into circumstances which made a deliverer necessary, is spoken of as God's Anointed One, with a reference to all the three sacred offices. David speaks of him as Jehovah's Anointed King, Isaiah as his Anointed Prophet, and Daniel as his Anointed Priest.⁴ During the period which elapsed from the close of the prophetic canon till the birth of Jesus, no appellation for the promised Deliverer seems to have been so commonly employed as this, The Messiah; and this is still the name which the Jews ordinarily use when they speak of Him whom they hope for, as "the glory of God's people Israel."

Our Lord is termed *The* Christ, or Anointed One, as standing apart, by himself, far elevated above all other anointed persons; just as he is, amid the countless millions of the sons of men, termed *The* Son of man.

The appellation Christ naturally called up to the mind

¹ Χριστός.

² Gen. xxviii. 18, xxxi. 13, xxxv. 14.

³ 1 Sam. xxiv. 6; 2 Sam. xxiii. 1; Lam. iv. 20; Lev. iv. 3.

⁴ Ps. ii. 3, xx. 6, xlv. 7; Isa. xli. 1; Dan. ix. 24-26.

of a believing Jew,—and such were all the writers of the New Testament, as well as most of its original readers,—much important and interesting truth respecting Him who bore it. The Christ, as they thought of him, was a person in whom all the varied predictions respecting the great promised Deliverer had found, or were to find, their accomplishment: the seed of the woman who was to bruise the head of the serpent; the seed of Abraham, in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed; the great Prophet like unto Moses, whom all men were required to hear and obey; the Priest after the order of Melchizedek; the Priest on his throne; the Root out of the stem of Jesse; the Branch of Jehovah; the Angel of the covenant; the Lord of the temple; the wonderful Counsellor; the mighty God; the Father of the future age; the Prince of peace; Immanuel, God with us; Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the Lord our Righteousness, our Justification, our Justifier.¹ While the name Christ naturally calls up all the truth respecting Him who bears the name, it brings him especially before the mind as Prophet, Priest, and King; the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King: the Prophet,—the great revealer of truth respecting the divine character and will; the Priest,—the only expiator of human guilt, and reconciler of man to God; the King,—the supreme and sole legitimate ruler over the minds and hearts of mankind. And he not only fills these offices and performs these functions, but he has been anointed to do so; that is, in figurative language, he has been divinely appointed, divinely qualified, divinely commissioned, and divinely accredited: divinely appointed,—“set up from everlasting,” God’s “elect” one; divinely qualified,—the Spirit of the Lord was given him not by measure; divinely commissioned,—“called of God as was

¹ Gen. iii. 15, xxii. 18; Deut. xviii. 15; Ps. cx. 4; Zech. vi. 13; Isa. ix. 6, xi. 1-10, vii. 14, iv. 2; Jer. xxiii. 6; Mal. iii. 1.

Aaron," "the Father sent him to be the Saviour of the world;" and divinely accredited,—the Father who sent him bears witness of him, "both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will."¹ So full of meaning is the appellation CHRIST, a word which I am afraid we often use without having any very definite idea in our minds; a word in which, however, is folded up the whole saving truth, so that he who, in the true, full import of the words, "believes that Jesus is the Christ," believes the saving truth, and has the privilege conferred on him of being a son of God.²

§ 2. *The just One.*

The second appellation given to the glorious Sufferer spoken of in the text is, the just, or the righteous One. "The just One," as well as the anointed One, is an appellation given to the great promised Deliverer in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. In the last prophetic words of David, he speaks of his Son and Lord under this name. "The just One ruleth among men;" for so do the best Scripture critics render the words translated in our version, "He that ruleth among men must be just." It is of him of whom it was predicted that "a bone of him should not be broken,"—that it is said by the same inspired writer, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous" or just One. The prophet Isaiah speaks of him as Jehovah's "righteous Servant;" and the prophet Zechariah, congratulating the Church on his appearance, exclaims, "Behold, thy King cometh. He is just, having salvation."³

¹ Prov. viii. 23; Isa. xlii. 1; Heb. v. 4; Isa. xi. 2-4, xlix. 6; Acts ii. 22; John v. 37.

² 1 John v. 1.

³ 2 Sam. xxiii. 3; Ps. xxxiv. 19, comp. with 20; Isa. liii. 11; Zech. ix. 9.

In obvious allusion to such passages, we find the appellation not unfrequently given by the New Testament writers to our Lord Jesus. "Your fathers," says Stephen, "have slain them who spake before of the coming of the just One." "Ye denied," says the Apostle Peter to his countrymen, "the Holy One, and the just." "The God of our fathers," said Ananias to Saul of Tarsus, "hath chosen thee to see that just One, and to hear the words of his mouth." "Ye have condemned and killed the just One," says the Apostle James to his unbelieving countrymen. "We have an advocate with the Father," says the Apostle John, "Jesus Christ the righteous."¹

The appellation is most accurately descriptive, both personally and officially, of Him who wears it. Personally our Lord is absolutely free from sin, and in heart and life completely conformed to the requisitions of the holy, just, and good law of God. The man Christ Jesus came into the world free from every taint or tendency to evil; and if the questions be asked, in reference to him, "What is man, that he should be clean? or he who is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?"—the evangelist will answer them: "The Holy Ghost came upon" his virgin mother, "and the power of the Highest overshadowed her;" and that which was born of her was a "Holy thing," and was "called," and was indeed, "the Son of God."² This original purity was never in the slightest degree stained. Though exposed to the assaults of the great author of evil, that adversary did not prevail against, that son of mischief did not overcome him. Though in a world full of temptation and sin, he remained untainted; though tried both by its smiles and its frowns, its terrors and its allurements, he never in the

¹ Acts vii. 32, iii. 14, xxii. 14; James v. 6; 1 John ii. 1.

² Job xv. 14, xiv. 4; Luke i. 35.

slightest degree imbibed its spirit or imitated its manners. He kept himself "unspotted from the world," being "in it, not of it;" and he died, as he lived, a stranger to guilt and depravity. No action, no word, ever escaped from him, no thought, no desire, ever arose in his bosom, inconsistent with the requisitions or with the spirit of the divine law. He left this world as he entered it, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."¹

But the character of our Lord was not merely free from faults; it was distinguished by every possible moral excellence. Every holy principle in absolute perfection reigned in his mind; and his conduct was a uniform tenor of perfect obedience to that law which was in his heart. He fulfilled the law in both of its great requisitions. "He loved the Lord his God with all his heart, and soul, and strength, and mind; and he loved his neighbour as himself." He "did justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with his God." He fully did all that God required, and cheerfully suffered all that God appointed. In principle, in extent, in continuance, his obedience completely answered the demands of the holy law, which is spiritual and exceeding broad. "His meat was to do the will of him who sent him, and to finish his work."² All excellences were found in him, and found in their due proportion; and they wrought together in uninterrupted harmony. "He was all fair; there was no spot in him."

"The just One" is an appellation equally applicable to him in his official administration as in his personal character; no less applicable to him as the Christ, than as the man Jesus. He is "faithful to Him who appointed him." He was appointed to glorify God in the salvation of an innumerable multitude of mankind; and in the accomplishment of this great work, "righteousness has been the

¹ Heb. vii. 26.

² John iv. 34.

girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins." He has shown in every part of his work, that "he loves righteousness and hates iniquity." As a Prophet, he has faithfully delivered the message he has received from his Father; he has "declared him whom no man hath seen at any time;" he has "manifested his name." His "mouth spoke truth; wickedness was an abomination to his lips." "All the words of his mouth were in righteousness; there was nothing froward or perverse in them." As a Priest, he has "fulfilled all righteousness." He has fully satisfied all the demands of the divine law on those in whose room he stood. When exaction was made, he answered it. There was not one requisition of the law, but he readily and completely met it. He obeyed the whole precept; he bare the entire penalty of the violated law. He "finished transgression, made an end of sin, brought in an everlasting righteousness." He "gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savour;" and thus "magnified the law and made it honourable." And as a King, he "reigns in righteousness," and rules in judgment. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." "The sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre." He is the true Melchizedek, the King of righteousness, as well as the Prince of peace. "In majesty he rides prosperously in the cause of truth, and meekness, and righteousness." His administration in reference to his own people is an administration of pure grace, but it is "grace reigning through righteousness unto everlasting life;" and ruling, as he does, in the midst of his enemies, his royal style and appellation is "FAITHFUL AND TRUE, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war."¹

¹ Heb. iii. 2; Isa. xi. 5; Ps. xlv. 7; John i. 18, xvii. 6; Prov. viii. 7, 8; Matt. iii. 15; Isa. liii. 7, Lowth; Dan. ix. 24; Eph. v. 2; Isa. xlii. 21, xxxii. 1; Ps. lxxxix. 14, xlv. 6, 4; Rom. v. 21; Rev. xix. 11.

While it is obvious, from these remarks, that the appellation, the just One, is admirably descriptive both of the personal character and the official administration of our Lord, there can be but little doubt that the great design of the inspired writer in using it here, is to fix our minds on the facts, that our Lord Jesus Christ, of all the sons of Adam, is the only just One—all the rest are unjust; and that, from the spotlessness of his nature, the perfection of his obedience to the preceptive part of the law, and the cheerfulness of his submission to its sanctionary enactments, all infinitely dignified by that divine nature which was in personal union with the human nature in which he obeyed and suffered,—there is in the sacrifice which by the appointment of his Father he offered up, an infinity of merit or righteousness, which, for all the purposes of law and justice, more than compensates for all the demerit and unrighteousness of those innumerable offences in the innumerable multitude of unjust ones in whose room he stood; so that HE, the righteous One, “who knew no sin,” having been “made sin” for them, they who were nothing but sin “might be made the righteousness of God in him.” The just One here is just equivalent to Isaiah’s “Jehovah’s righteous Servant, who justifies many, having borne their iniquities;” or Jeremiah’s “Jehovah our righteousness,” in whom, in whom alone, any unrighteous sinner can find righteousness; in whom every sinner, however unrighteous, will assuredly find righteousness, believing in Him.¹

II. HIS SUFFERINGS.

Having thus shortly illustrated the two descriptive appellations here given to the illustrious Sufferer, let us now, in the second place, turn our attention to his sufferings. “Christ,

¹ 2 Cor. v. 21; Isa. liii. 11; Jer. xxii. 6.

the just One, suffered; being put to death in the flesh." The exalted personage to whom these appellations belong, existed from before all ages in a state of the most perfect blessedness: "He was in the beginning with God," "in the bosom of the Father," enjoying glory with him before the foundation of the world, delighting in him, and delighted in by him. A state of suffering was not, then, his original condition.¹

But when, in order to gain the great objects of his eternal appointment, he, in the fulness of the times, took on him the nature of men in its present humbled state,—a state resulting from their violation of the divine law,—“the likeness of sinful flesh,” he, of course, became a sufferer: for “man born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble; he comes forth as a flower, and is cut down; he flees as a shadow, and continues not.” He is “born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.”²

It is obvious, however, that by divine appointment, Christ, the just One, was a sufferer far beyond the ordinary lot of mankind. His sufferings commenced with his birth. Unfurnished with the accommodations which the humblest ordinarily enjoy in entering into life, his birthplace was a stable, his cradle a manger. While yet an infant, his life was endangered by the unprincipled and cruel jealousy of a tyrant; and he was exposed to the hazards and fatigues of a hurried flight into a foreign country. At an early age he felt the pressure of the “primal curse,” “In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread,” and engaged in the toilsome labours of mechanical industry. We have no reason to believe that our Lord was ever affected by disease, but he experienced all the other sinless infirmities of our nature. He was hungry, and thirsty, and weary; felt the inconveniences of the extremes of cold and heat; and was

¹ John i. 1, 18, xvii. 5.

² Rom. viii. 3; Job xiv. 1, v. 7.

no stranger to disappointment, vexation, and sorrow, and the pangs of unrequited kindness and violated friendship. Destitute of the conveniences and comforts, he was but scantily and precariously furnished with the necessities of life. He seems often to have been indebted for a supply of these to the hospitality of others; and while "the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air nests, he had not where to lay his head."¹ Though followed and admired by multitudes, he was the object of the contempt and hatred of by far the greater part of his countrymen of all classes. He was the butt of the great man's scorn, and the poor man's contumely. He was represented as a mover of sedition and a speaker of blasphemy, an impostor or a madman, a glutton and a drunkard, an emissary of Satan, a friend and companion of the basest of men.

Nor were his sufferings limited to those inflicted by his fellow-men. He was exposed to temptations to sin from malignant spiritual beings, which to his holy mind must have been productive of the most poignant anguish. On one occasion, for forty successive days, in a desolate wilderness, he was subjected to these attacks; and we read that, when his infernal tormentor left him, he did so only "for a season." We know that, in the time of the deepest complication of the Saviour's sufferings, he returned. That was his hour when "the power of darkness" especially exerted itself.² The degree of suffering occasioned to a being so holy and so benignant, by witnessing the empire of the evil one in the depravity and wretchedness of mankind, can be very inadequately conceived of by even the holiest and most benevolent of imperfect men.

The severest of all his sufferings, however, were those which came immediately from the hand of God as the manifestation of the divine righteous displeasure at the sins

¹ Matt. viii. 20; Luke iv. 13.

² Matt. iv. 1-11; Luke xxii. 53.

of those in whose room he stood. These sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings. There is something in the inspired description of them, that excites amazement rather than communicates definite information : "A horror of great darkness" comes over his mind ; "he begins to be sorrowful, to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy ;" he "becomes suddenly possessed with fear, horror, and amazement ; encompassed with grief and overwhelmed with sorrow ; pressed down with consternation and dejection of mind ; tormented with anxiety and disquietude of spirit."¹ Under his intolerable load of anguish, he pours out his heart in supplication to his Father : "And, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly ; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Again and again, he, with strong crying and tears, repeats the same prayer, and an angel is sent to strengthen him. He was "poured out like water, his heart was like wax ; it was melted in the midst of his bowels."²

But the sufferings of Christ, the just One, were not yet completed. The awful solemnities of Gethsemane, its preternatural sufferings and consolations, were broken in on by a band of ruffians led on by a traitor disciple. Deserted by his friends, who had lately assured him of inviolable fidelity, he was dragged as a felon before the tribunal of the high priest, and there accused of the foulest crimes, and subjected to the vilest indignities. He was reviled and insulted in all the forms which wanton vulgar malignity could invent. They spat in his face, and buffeted him with the palms of their hands. And while thus abused by his enemies, he was basely denied with oaths and execrations by one of his followers, who had lately drawn his sword in his defence,

¹ The student will do well to consult the learned note in *Pearson on the Creed*, Art. iv. p. 190, fol. 1676.

² Luke xxii. 44 ; Ps. xxii. 14.

and declared that, though he should die with him, he would never deny him. With an impious mockery of justice under the form of law, he was condemned as worthy of death for imposture and blasphemy. Hurried before the judgment-seat of the Jewish procurator, he was there accused of the state crimes of sedition and treason; and though declared innocent of them, his dastardly judge delivered him up to the will of his inveterate foes, sentencing him first to the scourge and then to the cross. The barbarous soldiery who were entrusted with carrying the unrighteous sentence into execution, robed him in the garments of mock royalty, and wreathed a garland of thorns round his temples, in savage mockery of his claims to be a king. On his lacerated, bleeding, enfeebled body, he bore the ponderous instrument of torture and death to the place of execution; and, stripped of his raiment, he was there affixed to the cross, amid the sarcasms of the chief priests and the shouts of the populace. To add to his ignominy, two notorious malefactors were crucified along with him, and the middle cross was assigned him as the vilest criminal of the three. While hanging on the cross in agony, his enemies continued to insult him by their contemptuous speeches; and instead of water to quench his thirst, they offered him vinegar mixed with gall. To crown his sufferings, a dark cloud was interposed between him and his Father: the comforts of sensible intercourse with HIM, the source of his happiness, were withdrawn; and those words, so big with anguish, came forth from a breaking heart, "My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Such were the sufferings of Christ, the just One.

The sufferings were sufferings to death. When he suffered, he was "put to death in the flesh." After hanging on the cross for a number of hours, "he bowed the head, and gave up the ghost." His death was a violent death;

and of all violent deaths, that probably which inflicted most pain on the sufferer. During these tedious hours he suffered every moment more than the agonies of an ordinary death. It was of all modes of punishment, too, the most ignominious. No Roman citizen, however foul his crime, could be legally crucified. It was the punishment appropriated to felonious slaves. In being nailed to the cross, our Lord was exhibited as an outcast from society, a man who had no rights, a person unworthy of being treated as an ordinary human criminal; "a worm, and no man." It was also a death, in consequence of a Jewish law which required the dead bodies of criminals who had suffered capital punishment to be hung on a tree, as a token of their having suffered the vengeance of the law, which marked the peculiar character of his sufferings. It intimated that he died accursed, condemned of God as the victim of human transgression; "As it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree."¹ Surely well then may we, with all the emphasis that can be given to the term, pronounce that "even Christ, the just One, suffered."

What his sufferings were, none knew, none can ever know, but he who endured and he who inflicted them. We know he endured the adequate penalty of sin; but what that is, who can tell? We know it is the displeasure of God; but "who knoweth the power of His anger? According to his fear, so is his wrath." The most dreadful apprehension comes infinitely short of the more dreadful reality. Never was there a sufferer like Christ, the just One. He was, in a far higher sense than the weeping prophet, "the man who saw affliction by the rod of God's wrath." He was "the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." "Behold, and see, all ye that pass by, if there be any sorrow like unto the sorrow wherewith the Lord afflicted him in the

¹ Gal. iii. 13.

day of his fierce anger.”¹ To borrow the words of an old divine, “If hunger and thirst, if revilings and contempt, if sorrows and agonies, if stripes and buffetings, if condemnation and crucifixion, be suffering, Jesus suffered. If the infirmities of our nature, if the weight of our sins, if the malice of man, if the machinations of Satan, if the hand of God, could make him suffer, our Saviour suffered.” And of this wonderful fact we have the most abundant evidence: “If the annals of the times, if the writings of his apostles, if the death of his martyrs, if the confessions of the Gentiles, if the scoffs of the Jews, be testimonies, Jesus suffered.”²

Such views of the Saviour as have now been presented to you, are intended and calculated to have an important practical influence on our hearts and lives. If he is the divinely appointed, qualified, commissioned, accredited revealer of the will of God, let us “hear him,” him alone, as the authoritative teacher of religious truth. His word is the word of Him that sent him. Let us not disregard it, let us not reject it, let us not mutilate it, let us not adulterate it. Let us believe and obey his word, and humbly submit our minds to the teaching of his Spirit.

If he is the divinely appointed, qualified, commissioned, accredited expiator of human guilt, let us rely with unsuspecting confidence on the great sacrifice which, through the Eternal Spirit, he offered without spot and blemish to the Supreme Judge, and on the all-prevalent intercession which, on the ground of that sacrifice, he ever lives to make for all coming to God by him.

If he is the divinely appointed, qualified, commissioned, accredited King over God’s holy hill of Zion, let us seek to know his laws and ordinances; and knowing them, let us walk in them all blameless, confiding in his power to protect us amid, and to save us from, all our enemies.

¹ Ps. xc. 11 ; Isa. liii. 3 ; Lam. iii. 1, i. 12.

² Pearson.

If he is the righteous One, let us receive him as “of God, made to us righteousness.”¹ Let us, instead of going about to “establish our own righteousness,” seek to “be made the righteousness of God in him;” seek to “win him, and to be found in him;” and, deeply feeling that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags,” let us gladly and gratefully say, “Surely in the Lord have I righteousness: in the Lord I am justified, and in the Lord I glory.” And let us not forget that, as the righteous One, he is not only the ground of our acceptance, but the pattern for our imitation. Let us seek to be “righteous even as he was righteous.” Let it be our desire to be “in the world as he was in the world,” having his mind in us, and having “his life manifested in our mortal flesh.”²

Did Christ, the righteous One, suffer, and so suffer, for us? How inconceivably malignant must sin be, which made such sufferings of such a glorious person necessary to its expiation and pardon; and how inconceivably strong must his love be, which made him willingly undergo such sufferings, rather than that we should be exposed to the tremendous consequences of unexpiated, unforgiven iniquity!

Oh, how should we hate sin! Oh, how should we love the Saviour! Nothing is better fitted to animate and strengthen these two master principles of Christian holiness, the hatred of sin and the love of the Saviour, than the believing contemplation of his sufferings for sin in the room of sinners. Under the influence of the truth now stated, let each of us say in his heart, “Herein is love, not that I loved him, but that he loved me, and gave himself to be a propitiation for my sin.” I would put that to death in my flesh, which put Him to death in the flesh. I would mortify my members which are on the earth; I would crucify the flesh, with its

¹ 1 Cor. i. 30; Rom. x. 3; 2 Cor. v. 21; Phil. iii. 8, 9; Isa. lxiv. 6.

² Isa. xlv. 24, 25; 1 John iii. 7, iv. 17; Phil. ii. 5; 2 Cor. iv. 11.

affections and lusts; and forasmuch as He has suffered for me in the flesh, borne my sin in his own body to the tree, that I, being dead to sin, might live unto righteousness, I will arm myself with the same mind, that I no longer live the rest of my time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God; and taught by the grace of God in Christ his Son, the righteous One suffering for my sins in my stead, I will “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world; looking for the blessed hope, the glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;” “who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”¹

III. THE NATURE OF HIS SUFFERINGS.

We proceed now to call your attention to the account contained in the text, of the nature of these sufferings of “Christ the just One.” They were sufferings “for sins,” “for the unjust;” on account of sins, in the room of sinners. These two expressions seem plainly to intimate that our Lord’s sufferings were PENAL, VICARIOUS, and EXPIATORY; in other and plainer words, that they were the manifestation of the divine displeasure against sin, against the sin of men, and were intended and are found effectual to render the pardon of sin and the salvation of sinners consistent with, and gloriously illustrative of, the perfections of the divine character and the principles of the divine government. That is what we mean, when we say these sufferings were penal, vicarious, and expiatory. Let us shortly look at these three distinct but inseparably connected characters of our Lord’s sufferings.

¹ 1 John iv. 10; Col. iii. 5; Gal. v. 24; 1 Pet. iv. 1, 2; Tit. ii. 12-14

§ 1. *Penal.*

First, then, the sufferings of our Lord were penal sufferings. This was their grand, their leading characteristic. They were not disciplinary; intended to perfect his character. This is the view which is consistently enough taken of them by those who deny his divinity, and consider him as a man of our own order, the son of Joseph and Mary; and to which, with less consistency, some countenance has been given by men who held a purer faith. He was, throughout his whole course, holy, harmless, undefiled. His character was perfect from the beginning. He was, in every stage of his mortal life, just what he should have been—entirely conformed to the will of God. His life was not the acquirement, but the manifestation, of excellence. Being perfect in a moral sense, he needed not to be perfected.

He indeed “learned obedience by the things which he suffered;”¹ but that does not mean that he was disciplined by his sufferings into obedience. “The rod and reproof” were not necessary to teach him to obey. His Father’s law was in his heart; and to obey was as natural to him as to breathe. Neither does it mean, he learned by his sufferings how painful and difficult a thing obedience is; for it was just because it was obedience that suffering, otherwise intolerable, was readily borne by him. It was “his meat to do the will of him who sent him, and to finish his work.”² It means, that by his sufferings he became practically acquainted with the full amount of the obedience, “obedience unto death,” which was required of him as the Redeemer of man, and by which he was “perfected,” became fully accomplished, as to merit authority and sympathy for the discharge of all his functions as “the Captain

¹ Heb. v. 8.² John iv. 34.

of salvation, leading many sons to glory ;” “ the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey him.”¹

Nor was the great design of our Lord’s sufferings to give evidence of his divine mission, nor to afford opportunity for that display of the suffering virtues which was necessary to his being a perfect example to his followers. Both these ends have been gained by his sufferings ; but the first of these ends might have been gained without suffering at all ; and if the second had been the only or the chief end in view, suffering in degree more like that to which the bulk of mankind are exposed, we are ready to think, would have better served that purpose. There is much, very much, in the nature and in the extremity of our Lord’s sufferings, which both these hypotheses leave utterly unaccounted for.

The primary object of these sufferings was to manifest the displeasure of God against sin. They were “ for sins.” They were the very evils which, by divine appointment, are the result of the violation of his holy, just, and good law. Christ was treated just as if he had been a sinner, a very great sinner, the greatest of sinners. In the kind and degree of his sufferings, there was something that, even to his unreflecting countrymen, marked him as “ stricken of God,”² a doomed person.

Nor are we to think of these evils as merely the natural result of the appearing of such a being as the incarnate Son of God in a world peopled by guilty, depraved men, suffering under the partial infliction of the curse which their disobedience has incurred. This character of our Lord’s sufferings was the result of express divine appointment. “ God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” “ The Lord made to meet on him the iniquity of us all ;” so that exaction was made, and he

¹ Heb. v. 9.

² Isa. liii. 4.

answered it. Though he knew no sin, he was “made sin;” constituted liable to sufferings expressive of God’s displeasure against sin. Though he deserved nothing but blessings, he “was made a curse;” that is, he was doomed, divinely doomed, to suffering on account of sin.¹

The peculiar manner of his death marked, and was intended to mark, the penal nature of the whole course of suffering of which it was the close. In the Mosaic law it was provided, that the bodies of all who were put to death, by whatever means, for crime, should be exposed on a gibbet: “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” Every one whose body was hung on a tree was thus publicly declared to have paid his life as a forfeit to justice.² To the enlightened eye, there is found on the cross another inscription besides that which Pilate ordered to be written there: **THE VICTIM OF GUILT; THE WAGES OF SIN.** But how is this? How does, how can, the just One thus die for sins? How is the innocent, the perfect, God-man treated as if he were a sinner, the chief of sinners?

§ 2. *Vicarious.*

The answer to this question is to be found in the second character of his sufferings. When the just One died “for sins,” he died “for the unjust,” in the room of the unjust; in other words, his sufferings were vicarious. By divine appointment he suffered what sinners deserved, that provision might be made for their being delivered from the sufferings which they had merited, and to which they were doomed. “Messiah was cut off, but not for himself.” The just One suffered “for sins,” but it was “in the room of the unjust.”³

There is no possibility of reconciling the penal sufferings

¹ Gal. iv. 4; Isa. liii. 6, margin; 2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13.

² See note A.

³ Dan. ix. 26.

of the just One with the wisdom, benignity, or justice of the divine character and government, but on this supposition. The difficulty is great, even if you take the lowest ground that can be taken, the ordinary Socinian ground; for how are you to account for the benignant and righteous Governor of the world treating, or permitting to be treated, as a sinner, as a great sinner, an innocent and perfect man? But just as you elevate, in your conception, the sufferer in the scale of being, the difficulty increases, till, when the truth is stated, it swells beyond all possibility of being grasped by any created mind: the Son of God in human nature, all excellent, and infinitely beloved of his Father, is treated as if he were a sinner! "Wonder, O heavens: Be astonished, O earth!"

On the supposition that he was the substitute of guilty men,—that he voluntarily took their place in accordance with the benignant will of his Father, and, standing in their place, met with their desert,—the darkness which covers this part of the divine procedure is in some measure dispelled. We deserved to endure every kind and degree of suffering. We deserved to die accursed. He, standing in our room, met not with what he personally deserved, but with what we deserved.

This account of the matter, it may be said, removes one difficulty, but it is only by creating another. And it is true there is a difficulty, and a great one: How came he to occupy our place? But this difficulty is of a totally different character from that which we have just been considering. In the former case we were perplexed with an apparent want of wisdom, righteousness, and benignity in the divine dispensation; but admit, what cannot well be denied, that the Son of God had complete power over that human nature which he had taken into union with his divinity, and all foundation for accusing the divine govern-

ment of injustice, for treating him according to the character which he had voluntarily assumed, is obviously removed : and take into consideration the immeasurable glory which was to accrue to the character and government of God, in the prevention of an accumulation of sin and misery through all eternity, which baffles all power of imagination to estimate, and the securing of a corresponding accumulation of holy happiness, which this strange dispensation is fitted to secure,—which, so far as we know, could not have been secured in any other way,—which we are sure could not have been secured in any other way so well,—then, instead of an apparent want, there is an obvious superabundance, of wisdom and benignity in it. We do not cease to wonder,—if possible, we wonder more than ever ; but the expression of our wonder is not, “Doth God pervert judgment? Doth the Almighty pervert judgment?” It is, “O the depth of the riches both of the divine knowledge and wisdom, and righteousness and grace. How unsearchable are his counsels, and his ways past finding out!”¹ The difficulty now is, not to reconcile incompatibilities, but to comprehend infinities. There is still a mystery ; but it is a bright, not a dark one. It is the mystery of divine holiness and kindness ; and its contemplation at once awes and delights, as we fear Jehovah and his goodness. “Thy mercy is in the heavens, Holy, Holy, Holy One. How excellent is thy loving-kindness ! Is this the manner of man, O Lord God ?”

The doctrine of our Lord’s substitution has plainly, then, at least this proof of truth—that it, and it alone, accounts satisfactorily for the facts of the case, and leaves the subject free from all difficulties, except such as necessarily arise out of its nature. But this is but a small part of the evidence in its support.

¹ Job viii. 3 ; Rom. xi. 33.

The doctrine of the vicarious, as well as penal, nature of our Lord's sufferings, is implied in all those passages of Scripture, and they are very numerous, in which he is represented as having been a sacrifice for sin. The circumstance that the term "sin" is often used in the Hebrew Scriptures to signify a sin-offering, is a very strong proof that the victim was considered as standing in the room of the sinner; and how could the fact be more plainly stated than in the words of the Jewish legislator: "Aaron shall lay his hand on the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat?" When Christ, then, is said to "have had his soul made," or "to have made his soul a sacrifice for sin;" when he is said to be "a propitiation," that is, a propitiatory sacrifice, "in his blood;" when he is said to be "sacrificed for us as our passover;" when he is said to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; when he is said to have been "offered to bear the sins of many,"—we are plainly taught that he stood in our room, and bore the penal consequences of our violation of the divine law.¹

But the doctrine is not only requisite to account for the facts of the case, and necessarily implied in all those passages of Scripture where Christ is represented as a victim, and his death as a sacrifice; but it is frequently stated in the most explicit language in the Holy Scriptures. I shall quote a few passages. Speaking of Jehovah's righteous servant, Isaiah says, "We esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted,"—we reckoned him a person punished signally for his own great, though unknown crimes: "but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was on him.

¹ Lev. xvi. 21; Isa. liii. 10; Rom. iii. 25. *θῦμα*, not *ἰπιδίμα*, is the proper supplement to *ἰλαστήριον*.—1 Cor. v. 7; Heb. ix. 26, 28.

The Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all." Exaction was made, and he became answerable. "My righteous servant, by his knowledge, shall justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Numbered with the transgressors, he bore the sins of many." "Christ died *for* the ungodly" in the way in which some would dare to die for a good man, that is, to undergo death in his stead. "Christ bare our sins in his own body on the tree," or "to the tree."¹ These statements are so very explicit, that one is disposed to say, if the vicarious nature of our Lord's sufferings be not revealed in them, it is impossible that it should be revealed; for language furnishes no terms more clear and unequivocal for this idea than those which have been already employed.

§ 3. *Expiatory.*

The third idea which the language of the text conveys respecting the nature of our Lord's sufferings is, that they were expiatory. When he suffered in the room of sinners those evils which were the manifestations of the divine displeasure against their sins, it was in order to expiate or make atonement for their sins; or, in other words, to render the pardon of their sins consistent with the perfections of the divine character, the honour of the divine law, and the stability of the divine government; and as this was the design of his sufferings, so it has been completely gained by them.

This was the design of our Lord's sufferings. The prophet Daniel informs us that a great event was to take place at a fixed period, even that "Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself." And what was to be the object of this? "To finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness." John the Baptist describes our Lord as

¹ Isa. liii. 5-7, 11, 12; Rom. v. 6-8; 1 Pet. ii. 24.

“the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.” Our Lord himself says that he came to “give himself a ransom for many.” The apostle informs us that “he came in the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself,” and that “God made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Indeed, what could be the object of vicarious endurance of penal evil but expiation?¹

This end our Lord’s sufferings have completely gained. “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” We are redeemed by this price, so “much more precious than silver and gold.” “In him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.” “He is set forth a propitiation for our sins, through faith in his blood.” “He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”²

In this glorious truth, that the vicarious sufferings of our Lord have made full expiation for our sins, we ought joyfully to acquiesce, even though we were utterly incapable of perceiving how the means employed were fitted to gain the end. God, who knew what the expiation of sin required, appointed his incarnate Son to be the victim of human guilt, making to meet on him the iniquities of us all; and he has expressed, in the most unequivocal manner, that he is well pleased with the sacrifice which has been presented. “I have finished the work thou gavest me to do,” said the Saviour. “Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” And the Father heard him and answered him. He raised him from the dust of death, and placed him at his own right hand, and gave him all power in heaven and in earth, that he might give eternal

¹ Dan. ix. 24-26; John i. 29; Matt. xx. 28; 2 Cor. v. 21; Heb. ix. 26.

² 1 John i. 7; 1 Pet. i. 18; Eph. i. 7; Rom. iii. 25; 1 John ii. 2.

life to all coming to the Father by him; that in expecting pardon and salvation on the ground of his expiatory sacrifice, “our faith and hope might be in God.”¹

But when we look at the whole wondrous dispensation as unfolded in Scripture, we cannot help saying, “It *became* him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things,”² *thus* to dispense pardon and salvation. There is more honour done to the divine law by the incarnate Son of God yielding, in the room of the guilty, a holy obediential submission to its penal sanction, than could have been done it by their everlasting destruction. We wonder how the Father should not spare his Son, but deliver him up to be the victim of human guilt. We wonder how “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person,” the Creator and Lord of the universe, should have in human nature made himself a sacrifice; but we do not wonder that the Father was propitiated by that sacrifice, we do not wonder that by that sacrifice the Son “purged our sins.” We wonder that “he, by whom and for whom all things were created, that are in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers,” who is before them all, and by whom they all subsist, should, “in fashion as a man,” shed his blood on a cross; but we do not wonder that “through that blood we should have redemption, even the forgiveness of sins.” We not only believe it because God says it; but we see that, if HE has been the propitiation for our sins, God is just, that he is “the just God” as well as “the Saviour, while he justifies the ungodly, the sinner believing in Jesus;” and we feel the conclusiveness of the apostle’s noble argument: “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the

¹ John xvii. 4, 5; 1 Pet. i. 21.

² Heb. ii. 10.

blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."¹

These remarks on the nature of our Lord's sufferings as penal, vicarious, and expiatory, force on our minds the reflection,—How fearful are the state and prospects, how certain and dreadful will be the destruction, of those sinners who are not by the faith of the truth savingly interested in the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Jesus Christ! "If these things were done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"

"Had it been possible for sin to be pardoned, and for sinners to be saved, without the atonement made by the sufferings and death of the Son of God, we may be sure that these sufferings and that death would never have been endured." No. God would have spared his Son. He would not have given him up for us, could sin have been pardoned without being expiated, or could it have been expiated at a less cost, by a less noble victim. We argue this on the ground of divine wisdom, justice, and goodness. That wisdom does nothing in vain; that justice could not afflict the guiltless but with his own consent, and for an adequate end; that goodness could inflict no needless suffering, especially on one who was worthily the object of his entire complacency, his infinite delight. If it had been possible that the salvation of a guilty world could have been effected without atonement, without such an atonement, Christ had not died. Nothing presents to the mind more strikingly than this, the impossibility of sin being

¹ Heb. i. 3; Col. i. 14-16; Rom. iii. 25, 26; Heb. ix. 13-15.

pardoned, or the sinner saved, without a personal participation in the expiatory efficacy of the one great sacrifice. "There is not a surer proof of the reality of hell than the cross; not one clearer evidence of the certainty of future vengeance than the means provided for averting it. Had the punishment of iniquity not been under the divine government a sure and settled thing, we should never have heard of such an atonement, or any atonement being made for it. Calvary confirms the sentences of Sinai. What justice thundered from Sinai, mercy, though with tearful eye, yet with unfaltering voice, whispers from Calvary, and the announcement is more fearful in the whisper than in the thunder."¹ The soul that has sinned, and puts away from it the blood of the only atoning sacrifice, must die, die the second death. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." "His blood cleanseth from all sin;" but if you put it away from you as "a common thing," your blood must be shed, the life of your souls must answer for it: and yet there can be no remission, there is no atonement in your sufferings, there can be none; for there is no adequate satisfaction to the demands of law and justice.

And the destruction of the neglecter, the despiser, of the blood of the Son, by whom alone there is expiation, will be as dreadful as it is certain. If we form our judgment of the amount of the penalty from the amount of the expiation, no light thought of it will for a moment lodge within us. Nowhere is the lesson, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,"² more alarmingly uttered than from the cross. The wrath of God is on the unpardoned

¹ These sentences within inverted commas, in this paragraph, and many of the thoughts in it and the following one, are borrowed from one to whose valuable writings the author owes ampler and heavier obligations—his esteemed and beloved brother and friend, Dr Wardlaw.

² Heb. x. 31.

sinner, and it must abide on him if he lay not hold of the hope set before him in the gospel,—if, by the faith of the truth, he do not become one with him who suffered, the just in the room of the unjust. Who knoweth the power of this wrath? Look to the cross, and find there the most adequate answer that can be given to this dreadful question. He who hangs there knows the power of this wrath. Think on what He suffered; and learn to think justly of the evil of sin, and of what awaits the obstinate unbelieving sinner. If God spared not his Son, standing in the room of sinners, shall he spare the sinner who madly insists on keeping his own place, and refuses to seek shelter under the overshadowing wings of the angel of the covenant? No: there is no salvation without pardon; no pardon without atonement; no atonement without satisfaction; no satisfaction but in the atonement of Christ Jesus. No: “there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin;” and to him who rejects it, “there remaineth nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, to devour the adversaries.”¹

I cannot close this section of the discourse with these tremendous words. No. Unbelieving, impenitent sinner, thou art yet within the sphere, throughout which the infinite atonement is shedding its saving influence. Once more, it may be only once more, thou hearest the sincere affectionate call of “God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses:” “Be reconciled.” He who knew no sin, has been made sin in the room of men, that they may be made the righteousness of God in him. “Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die?” “Behold the Lamb of God bearing, and bearing away, the sin of the world.” “Be it known to you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached

¹ Heb. x. 26, 27.

to you the forgiveness of sin." "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners," even the chief; that he came to "give his flesh for the life of the world;" that "his blood cleanseth us from all sin;" and that "he is able to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him."¹ Believe, and live. Persist in unbelief, and absolutely certain, inconceivably dreadful, must be your perdition. The divine decree, confirmed by an oath, "The unbeliever shall not enter into my rest," is unrepealed, unrepealable.

But, blessed be God, not less surely established in the heavens is that faithful saying, "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER"—whosoever, though his sins in number be infinite, and in heinousness and aggravation beyond all created power to estimate—whosoever, however frequently he has, in resisting the command to believe, and in refusing the offer of mercy, called God a liar, and trampled under foot equally his authority and his grace—WHOSOEVER "believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."²

IV. THE DESIGN OF HIS SUFFERINGS, "TO BRING MEN TO GOD."

We are now prepared to proceed with our illustration of the apostle's statement of the design of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Christ, the just One. They were intended "to bring us, to conduct us, to God." The phrase, to "bring men to God," is obviously figurative. But, though figurative, it is not obscure. It obviously indicates some change in man's relations and dispositions and actions

¹ 2 Cor. v. 20; Ezek. xxxiii. 11; John i. 29; Acts xiii. 18; 1 Tim. i. 5; John vi. 51; 1 John i. 7; Heb. vii. 25.

² John iii. 16.

—his state and character and conduct in reference to God. This change is represented under the image of bringing a person near to another, from whom previously he had been at a distance. Such ideas as distance, nearness, and motion, borrowed from physical objects, must, when applied to moral subjects, be understood figuratively; and such expressions as that before us communicate no real information to the mind, till the idea, stripped of its metaphorical dress, stands before us in its naked reality. Then the figure will be of use in illustrating the thing signified. Till this is done, there is nothing in the mind but a confused jumble of material images and moral truths.

Distance of one person from another, when the phrase is used figuratively, is descriptive of ignorance, enmity, dissimilarity, and non-intercourse; want of acquaintance, want of friendship, want of resemblance, want of fellowship. When men, then, are represented, as they often are in Scripture, as far from God, the meaning is, they are ignorant of his character and will; they are in a state of enmity against him, and the objects of his displeasure; they are very unlike God, indeed directly opposed to him in the general features of their moral character; and they are estranged from him, having no favourable intercourse and fellowship with him. And when men are said to be brought to God, it is intimated to us that their state and character in reference to God are materially and most beneficially altered; that from a state of ignorance and error, they are brought to the true knowledge of his character and will; that from a state of mutual hostility, they are brought into a state of reconciliation; that from a state of moral dissimilarity, they are brought into a state of moral resemblance; and that from a state of estrangement and non-intercourse, they are brought into a state of habitual and friendly fellowship. You see, then, the meaning of

the figurative expression in the text, the bringing men to God; and thus you may clearly perceive the object to which all the succeeding illustrations will be directed—to make it evident to you that the great design of the penal, vicarious, expiatory, sufferings of the incarnate Son of God, the appointed Saviour of men, was to lead men to just views of the divine character and will, to reconcile them to God, to make them like God, and to establish a friendly intercourse between them and God—to show that they have effected this design, and to show, too, how they have effected it. This must be kept steadily in view by all who would wish fully to understand the subsequent part of our illustration of this vitally important subject.

§ 1. *To bring men to the knowledge of God.*

I observe, then, in the first place, that it was a design of the sufferings of Christ for sins, and in the room of sinners, to bring men to the true knowledge of the character and will of God. In this respect, as indeed in every phase of meaning which belongs to the figurative expression, man was originally *near* God. Man was originally made, as it has been happily expressed, “receptive of a Deity.”¹ He was endowed with faculties capable of apprehending the signatures of divinity impressed on all the works of the divine hand, whether in creation or providence; and with a disposition to exercise these faculties—a taste for the high and holy satisfaction growing out of the mental contemplation of boundless power, regulated by perfect wisdom and righteousness, and influenced by perfect benignity; and he was moreover blessed with direct communications from heaven of what, in reference to his own relations and duties to God, it was most desirable for him to know. He was made “in God’s image, after his likeness;” and we

¹ Howe.

know that that image consists “in knowledge” as well as “in righteousness and holiness.”¹

When Adam sinned, we are not to suppose, that immediately on his transgression he lost, as by a miracle, all such information respecting the divine character and will as he had previously possessed, or that he was deprived of those rational faculties by which he was made capable of acquiring such information: But becoming an object of the divine judicial displeasure, necessarily from his becoming a sinner, two things followed, which most materially affected the state of his knowledge: he ceased to be the subject of that holy divine influence, the communication of which is the strongest manifestation of the divine favourable regard, which makes those intelligent beings over whom it exerts its benignant power count all knowledge worthless in comparison of “the excellent knowledge” of God; and the Divine Being having now become an object of dread and aversion to guilty and depraved man, it must have become a desirable thing with man “not to retain God in his knowledge,” to dismiss him as much as possible from his mind, to guard against the entrance of thoughts about Him, as calculated to interfere with his favourite pursuits, to poison his chosen enjoyments.²

The natural operation of these two circumstances would very soon have led to the utter extinction of all true knowledge of God among mankind, even keeping out of view the influence of him who is the prince of darkness, and who, as he led them first away from God, seeks to alienate them from Him more and more, by shutting out the truth respecting God from their minds, and filling them with false views of his character. The religious knowledge of the parents of the human race would soon have been lost. It

¹ Gen. i. 27; Col. iii. 10; Eph. iv. 24.

² Rom. i. 28. *Ὁὐκ ἰδοκίμασαν τὸν Θεὸν ἔχον ἰσχυρῶς.*

would in a great measure have died with them ; and succeeding generations born ignorant of it,—not destitute, indeed, of faculties to acquire it, but placed in circumstances in which they had few facilities for acquiring it ; with no supernatural revelation, which, in the supposed case, could not exist ; destitute of all inward impulse towards the acquisition of such knowledge, nay, positively indisposed to its pursuit ; exposed to a powerful influence, the object of which is to prevent the entrance of such knowledge into the mind, and to produce false views on its subjects,—must have been almost entirely unacquainted with, must have become fearfully misinformed in reference to, the divine character and will. This, I say, would have been the state of all mankind, had things been left to their natural, or rather unnatural, course, which, blessed be God, they were not ; and even as it is, with all the preventive means he has employed, such is nearly the actual state of a very large portion of the human race, “the nations who know not God :” and, indeed, with regard to every human being, however largely furnished with the means of information, his natural state is a state of ignorance and error respecting the divine character and will. Now, what is required to bring such men to the knowledge of the truth on these all-important subjects ?

There are obviously two things that are absolutely necessary for this purpose : First, a revelation of the truth with regard to the divine character and will, couched in intelligible language, and attended with sufficient evidence ; and, secondly, an influence sufficiently powerful to counteract man’s indisposition, man’s antipathy, towards such knowledge, and to fix the attention of the mind on this revelation and its evidence, and keep it fixed, till its meaning and authority are so perceived as that it is understood and believed. There is no other conceivable way of communi-

cating the true knowledge of God to a man unacquainted with the divine character, and indisposed to seek knowledge, strongly disposed to eschew it, but that which I have just described. The revelation is not enough without the influence; nor the influence without the revelation. Both are necessary; and, when they are united, they are sufficient to serve the purpose. Accordingly, we find such is the method which God has adopted, to prevent the utter extinction of all true knowledge of himself in the world, and is employing, to make the true knowledge of himself universal in the world. The revelation of his character and will in the Holy Scriptures, attended by the influence of his Spirit, leading men to understand and believe them, is the grand means of bringing men from darkness to light, from the slavery of Satan to the service of God, by putting them in possession of that eternal life which is implied in the true knowledge of the only true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.

But some of you are probably disposed to say, "All this is very true, and very important; but apparently not very much to the purpose. You began with asserting the influence of Christ's penal, vicarious, and expiatory sufferings, on men's being brought to the true knowledge of God; and you have only shown us that the Word of God and the Spirit of God are necessary and sufficient for this purpose." I have not, however, finished my illustration. When I have shown, as I am just about to do, that but for the penal, vicarious, and expiatory sufferings of Christ, there could have been no such divine revelation, no such divine influence, as we have been speaking of, it will appear with sufficient clearness, that ignorant deluded man's restoration to the knowledge of God is closely connected with, is necessarily dependent on, those sufferings for sin in the room of the unjust.

What would have been the situation of mankind in the present state, had the atonement not formed a part of the divine arrangement, it is not very easy fully and distinctly to bring before the mind: it is, however, very evident that but for this we could have had no Bible, and no divine influence to enable us to understand and believe the Bible, and of course we could have had no true knowledge of God. God, in consistency with his moral perfections, can bestow directly no spiritual blessing on the objects of his righteous condemnation. Whatever good of this kind he does to man, he does through the mediation of his Son; and whatever he does through the mediation of his Son, he does with a reference to his atoning sacrifice. Had it not been that Christ, as the victim of human guilt, the ransom of human beings, "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world," was "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world,"¹ no revelation of the truth respecting the character of Jehovah, as the God of holiness and love, justice and mercy, could ever have reached our earth, nor could a divine influence have found its way to the heart of condemned, depraved man, to render that revelation effectual.

Indeed, what is the revelation of God which serves this purpose but the revelation of "his glory in the face of his Son,"² that is, in his person and in his work? What man needs is "repentance towards God;"³ a change of mind respecting God. It were endless to detail all the erroneous views of men with regard to the divine character; but there are two mistakes universally prevalent among men, in their unconverted state, on this subject. They do not believe God to be the holy Being he really is; they do not believe him to be the benignant Being he really is. These were

¹ 1 Pet. i. 20.

² 2 Cor. iv. 6.

³ Μετάνοια εἰς τὸν Θεόν. Acts xx. 21.

the original false views which the father of lies infused into the mind of man. It is in the atonement of Jesus, the incarnate only-begotten of God, that the immaculate holiness and the inconceivable kindness, the inflexible justice and the transcendent mercy of the Divine Being, are most gloriously and affectingly displayed. That exhibition of the divine character forms the great subject of the scriptural revelation. Everything is subordinated to the bringing of this out in strong relief; and it is, indeed, just in proportion as men understand and believe the truth on this subject that they really know God.

God is not truly known, though we may be acquainted with many of his attributes and works, till he is known as "God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to men their trespasses; seeing he has made him sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."¹ "No man has seen," no man can see, "God; the only-begotten of the Father, who was in his bosom, He has declared him."² In his work primarily, and then in his word, which is the record of his work, he has disclosed the mingled glories of divine holiness and grace, and the unfathomable depth of divine wisdom, and the exceeding greatness of divine power, in the formation and execution of that wondrous scheme, of which his atoning death was, as it were, the foundation and centre. Hence, in the estimation of the apostle, the most direct way of bringing men, sunk in ignorance and error, to the knowledge of God, was to preach Christ, Christ crucified. "Here shine spotless justice, incomprehensible wisdom, and infinite love, all at once. None of them darkens or eclipses the other: every one of them gives a lustre to the rest. They mingle their beams, and shine with united eternal splendour; the just Judge, the merciful Father, and the

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19, 21.

² John i. 18.

wise Governor. Nowhere does justice appear so awful, mercy so amiable, or wisdom so profound.”¹

And as there could be no such revelation of the divine character as is necessary to bring man to a right knowledge of God, without these penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of the Son of God, so without these sufferings there could have been no such divine influence as the depravity of man makes necessary to secure that that revelation, however clear and well accredited, shall serve its purpose. It is with a reference to this atonement that all saving divine influence is put forth. The Holy Spirit, in his renewing influence, is “shed forth abundantly through Jesus Christ the Saviour;” and redemption from the curse lays the foundation for our receiving “the promised Spirit through believing.”²

In order that God may be known by fallen man, there must be a revelation of God—a suitable revelation of God. The giving of that revelation goes on the supposition that God has been propitiated by an atonement; and the atonement by which God is propitiated is the great subject of the revelation, and makes it what it is,—a revelation fitted to give fallen men just views of the divine character. To the knowledge of God by fallen man, a divine influence is necessary to dispose him to receive, to make him understand and believe, this revelation; and but for the sufferings of Jesus Christ, no such influence could have been put forth. Thus, we trust, we have made it clear to the understandings of all, that to lead men into the knowledge of the divine character by a revelation not only confirmed, but merited, by his sufferings,—and which is a revelation of God chiefly because it is an account of those sufferings in which the character of God is unfolded,—and by a divine influence not only dispensed, but procured, by him, is one design

¹ M'Laurin.

² Tit. iii. 5, 6; Gal. iii. 13, 14.

which the Saviour had in view when, according to the benignant good pleasure of his Father, He, as the just One, suffered for sins in the room of the unjust.

On allowing the mind to rest on such views, the reflection naturally rises, How highly should we value our Bibles! How highly should we value them, when we think what they have cost! How highly should we value them, when we think what they contain! How highly should we value them, when we think what end they are intended and fitted to serve!

How much have our Bibles cost? They have not cost us much. Though there once was a time when, even in this country, a single copy of the Scriptures was a possession to which only the wealthy and noble could aspire,¹ yet, ever since any of us can recollect, the Bible was to be obtained at a moderate price; and we have great cause to rejoice that now the best of books is the cheapest of books.² If any one in our country is without a Bible, the reason must be sought somewhere else than in the scarceness or the dearness of the inspired volume. Yet the Bible, which costs us so little, cost some very dear, through whose instrumentality it comes to us. Our English Bible cost William Tyndale his life; and many others "bonds and imprisonments." Indeed, it were difficult to estimate the amount of labour and suffering which our English Bible has cost;³ still more difficult to estimate the expense of toil

¹ In England, in 1274, the price of a Bible, with a commentary, fairly written, was L.30; the equivalent of fifteen years' work of a labourer, whose wages were then 1½d. a day. In 1429, Wiclif's New Testament sold for L.2, 16s. 8d., equal to L.30 of our money.—*Le Bas' Wiclif*, and *Townley's Biblical Anecdotes*.

² See note B.

³ My ancient and much esteemed friend, the Rev. Christopher Anderson, in his elaborate and valuable *Annals of the English Bible from 1524 to 1844*, has, at a great expense of time and toil, furnished British

and sacrifice at which, since the beginning, the preservation and transmission of the sacred books have been secured. All these considerations go to enhance the value of our Bibles; but they are all as nothing in comparison with the consideration which the subject of our discourse brings before the mind. Looking at our Bibles, we may well say, "They were not gotten for gold, neither was silver weighed for their price. They cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. No mention shall be made of the coral, or pearls; for their price is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal them, neither can they be valued with fine gold." They were not purchased for us by "such corruptible things as silver and gold;" nay, not by such things even as the travail of men's minds, or the sacrifice of men's lives, but "by precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot—the blood of Christ."¹ Our Bibles are blood-bought Bibles! Surely, then, we should value them, and show our value for them by rightly using them. He who neglects the Bible pours contempt on the blood of the incarnate Son of God.

Our regard to the Bible should be strengthened by the consideration of what it contains. It is the record of those sufferings of which it is one of the many precious results. It tells us, of what it never could have entered into the heart of man to conceive, that He who was "God manifest in the flesh," died, died as a victim, in our room, for our salvation. It tells us how He who "was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, humbled himself;" took on him the nature of a man, the form of a servant, the likeness of a sinner; and, having had our sins

Christians with the means of forming a just judgment on the topics referred to in the text; and they will not act with wisdom and gratitude if they do not avail themselves of these means.

¹ Job xxviii. 15-19; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

made to meet on him, became "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." What are the events of history, what are the wonders of nature, what are the inventions of art, what are the discoveries of research, what are the demonstrations of science, compared with this! "Into these things angels desire to look;"¹ and shall we, we who have so much deeper an interest in them, turn away from them with indifference or disgust?

Another consideration calculated to increase our regard to our Bible, which our subject brings before the mind, is the end for which it is designed. It is the design of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Christ, by means of the Bible, to bring us to God; to make us acquainted with him "whom to know is life eternal," and acquaintance with whom is at once necessary and sufficient to secure true peace to the mind; to restore us to his favour "whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life;" to conform us to his image who is the perfection of intellectual and moral beauty; and to introduce us to intercourse with him whose fellowship is the highest honour and the highest blessedness of the highest order of intellectual beings. Let us then value our Bibles; we cannot overvalue them. Let us show our sense of their worth by applying them to the purpose for which they have been given to us; and let us show our love to our fellow-men, by exerting ourselves, that all of them may be put in possession of a gift so costly and so advantageous.

The same considerations which should lead us to value the divine word, should lead us to value the divine influence. Both are necessary to our salvation. Neither could have been ours, but for the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of the Son of God. Let those of us who have obtained the Spirit through believing, "having obeyed the truth by the

¹ 1 Pet. i. 12.

Spirit," seek larger measures of his influence for ourselves. We obtained it when we were not seeking it, when from our ignorance and unbelief we could not seek it; but now that we know its reality and its value, let us seek a more abundant effusion of it. Jesus has died, Jesus has been glorified, that the Spirit may be poured down from on high. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: for every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall our Father in heaven give" good gifts, give his "Holy Spirit, to them who ask him!" . And let us not confine our prayers to ourselves, but extend them to those who are yet "sensual, and have not the Spirit." Let us say, "Come from the four winds, O Spirit of the Lord, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."¹ He could, He alone could, bring us to God. He can, He alone can, bring them to God. Let us bless the Son, to whose meritorious sufferings we owe the word of life and the Spirit of life; and let us bless the Father, to whom we owe the Son, and all the blessings he procures and bestows; in bringing us back to him, in drawing nearer and nearer to whom, through eternal ages, consists "the whole" of man,² the whole of his holiness, honour, and happiness.

The subject we have been considering naturally suggests an important question in which we all have a very deep interest. Has this end of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Jesus Christ, the bringing men to the true knowledge of God,—has this end been answered in us as individuals? Have we thus been brought to God? Do we know God? Do we really understand and believe the truth with regard to the divine character? This is far from being a common attainment, even in this nominally Chris-

¹ Luke xi. 9-13; Ezek. xxxvii. 9.

² Eccles. xii. 13.

tian country. It is far from being a universal attainment, even among members of Christian churches. Many are called by the name of the true God. Many externally call on that name who do not know it, who are entire strangers to that knowledge of the only true God which is eternal life. No man has this knowledge naturally. No man can acquire it without divine teaching. Brother may say to brother, Know the Lord; but the knowledge of God is "a good gift that cometh down from above." "The Lord giveth" this "wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."¹ Are we in possession of this knowledge of God, this knowledge which brings us near God, which makes us habitually dwell as in his presence? He who thus knows God, trusts in him. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee."² He that knows God as he ought, loves God. He who knows God follows on to know him, "counting all things loss" in comparison of this excellent knowledge; yet "not counting himself to have attained, neither to be already perfect," but "following after to apprehend that for which also he has been apprehended of God." He that knows God is "strong, and does exploits" in the spiritual warfare. He who is thus acquainted with God, is "at peace,"—at peace with God, at peace with himself, at peace with all the world. He who knows God is transformed by his knowledge, "changed into the same image, from glory to glory."³ Are we in possession of this knowledge? And is it in the school of the cross that we have learned it? Are the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings, the mirror in which we with open face have seen the unveiled glories of the divine character?

If this is indeed the case, happy are we. We "walk in the light of his countenance;" we "rejoice in his name all

¹ Prov. ii. 6.

² Ps. ix. 10.

³ Phil. iii. 3-12; Job xxii. 21; 2 Cor. iii. 18.

the day," and we "are exalted in his righteousness." We are near him, and we shall yet be nearer him. "We know in part;" ere long "we shall know even as we are known." We shall be brought very near him, even to the light which is his dwelling-place; "and in his light we shall see light."¹

But if we have not been thus brought to God, by being made truly to understand, really to believe, the truth respecting him, especially as manifested in the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of his incarnate Son; though in words we should profess to know Him, living and dying in these circumstances, we shall find our place among "them who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." And we know that when He comes, it will be "in flaming fire, to take vengeance" on all such. To those who never knew him in truth, though they professed to know him, he will say, "I never knew you: depart from me."² And then they shall never, never know God, but as a God of righteous vengeance; never so know Him as to have life eternal in the knowledge of Him. Far from him now, they shall everlastingly go further and further from the light of life into the blackness of darkness, never to find their way back to Him, the Sun of the universe, the Fountain of knowledge, purity, and happiness. But now they may. To them who are furthest from Him in ignorance and in error, and in alienation through that ignorance and error that are in them, God still proclaims, "Acquaint yourself now with ME, and be at peace." "No man hath seen," no man can see me; but "the Only-Begotten has declared" me. "He that hath seen the Son hath seen the Father." Look to Jesus, then, if you would know God. "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity; how long, ye fools, will ye hate knowledge?" "Turn ye at his

¹ Ps. lxxxix. 15-17; 1 Cor. xiii. 12; Ps. xxxvi. 9.

² 2 Thess. i. 7, 8; Matt. vii. 23.

reproof: behold, he will pour out his Spirit unto you, he will make known his words to you;” he will give you “an understanding heart,” and “ye shall know he is the Lord.”¹

§ 2. *To bring men to favour with God.*

A second view of the object of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Christ is, that they were designed to bring men from a state of enmity into a state of reconciliation with God. The original state of man in reference to God was one of cordial friendship. It was the state of a dutiful child in the well-regulated family of a wise and affectionate parent; it was the state of a loyal subject under the government of a wise and benevolent prince: the happiness of the child was in accordance with, and secured by, the good order of the family; the happiness of the subject was accordant with, and secured by, the good government of the state. The Father, the Sovereign, regarded the dutiful child and subject with complacent approbation and kindness; and the dutiful child and subject regarded the wise and righteous and benignant Father and Sovereign with veneration, love, and confidence.

The introduction of sin necessarily revolutionized all this. The order of the family made it necessary that the undutiful child's conduct should be distinctly marked with the Father's displeasure. The well-being of the community made it necessary that the rebel subject should be adequately punished. Man, when he became a sinner, became, necessarily became, the object of the judicial displeasure and of the moral disapprobation of God. His happiness became opposed to the honour of the divine character, and to the stability and well-being of the divine government. No change took place in God. He is Jehovah; he cannot change. He is “the Father of lights, with whom there is

¹ Job xxii. 21; John i. 18, xiv. 9; Prov. i. 22, 23; Jer. xxiv. 7.

no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The change had taken place in man ; and his changed moral state necessarily produced a change in his moral relations to the unchanged One,—produced such a change just because He was the unchanged, the unchangeable One. Had there been no such change, God must have changed ; he must have ceased to be holy and just, to love righteousness, and to hate iniquity. Man, the safe happy child and subject, has thus become the disowned outcast, the condemned rebel ; and dislike, suspicion, and fear have in his heart taken the place of affectionate esteem and humble confidence.

Thus man, the sinner, in both these respects, is far from God ; and the natural course of things is, that he should go further and further from God, sink deeper and deeper in guilt, become more and more hardened in alienation and enmity. "God is," and cannot but be, "angry with the wicked every day." "He will," he can, "by no means clear the guilty."¹ If the sinner *will* continue to break the holy, just, and good law, that holy, just, and good law *must* continue to sentence him to merited adequate punishment. God cannot deny himself. His will, his nature, cannot change with man's wayward inclinations. And the sinner becomes every day, by the indulgence of forbidden dispositions, and the perpetration of forbidden crimes, more and more an alien and an enemy. He knows God is displeased with him, and that He has reason to be so. He hates the law, which he cannot but abstractly approve ; and he regards the Author and Executor of that law with mingled fear and aversion. "The carnal mind is enmity against God ; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."²

The inquiry, Is it a possible thing that man, in this aspect of his moral state and religious relations, as far from God, should be brought near to him ? is a question which,

¹ Ps. vii. 11 ; Ex. xxxiv. 6.

² Rom. viii. 7.

if proposed to the unfallen angels, would certainly not have been answered in the affirmative. With their high adoring sentiments of the unfathomable wisdom, and unbounded power, and infinite benignity of God, they would not have, with the rashness men often manifest in treating similar questions, pronounced such a consummation absolutely impossible. But the probabilities must have appeared to them fearfully against it. The angels who sinned perished irremediably. Would he who spared not sinning angels, ministers of light, spare sinning men, the children of the dust? And how could he spare them, without tampering with justice and violating faithfulness? If it be possible, it must be in some way which reconciles apparent incompatibilities; for God cannot deny himself. Had the question been proposed to those wise and holy beings, their reply would probably have been, "O Lord, THOU knowest:" and had it then been announced to them that the event was not only possible, but certain; and that in the depth of the divine counsels lay a plan for its accomplishment; and had they been called to conjecture what were the means which God had devised, that "his banished should not be expelled from him,"¹ they would have been as much at a loss as ever. They would have answered, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us: it is high, we cannot attain to it." Most certain it is that the truth could never have entered into their mind, that this end was to be gained by the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of the Only-Begotten of God, "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person." Yet so it is; and though this method of bringing God and man into a state of reconciliation could never have suggested itself to the mind of man or angel, yet now that it has been developed in the incarnation, and life, and death, and resurrection, and exaltation of the divine

¹ 2 Sam. xiv. 14.

Saviour, as described in the word of the truth of the gospel, we cannot help perceiving how admirably fitted it is to accomplish its mighty purposes, in making the pardon and salvation of man consistent with the perfections of the divine character and the principles of the divine government; in destroying the natural enmity of the depraved human heart, and in again making God and man the objects of most complacent mutual regards.

We do not here ask what was necessary to make God willing that self-ruined man should be ultimately happy. Nothing was necessary to this but his essential infinite benignity. He has "no pleasure in the death of him that dieth."¹ Should the whole sinning universe perish, it is not for want of love in him who is love. The question here is, What could reconcile the exercise of mercy to man with the claims of the divine justice, with the declarations of the divine law, with the stability of the divine government, with the well-being of the great moral family of God? It was necessary that something should be done which would place the excellence of the divine law, which had been violated, in a point of view at all events no less clear than the unswerving obedience of the human race as unfallen, or the everlasting destruction of the human race as fallen, would have done. To all created wisdom, it must have appeared a hopeless inquiry, What can do this?

Yet this has been accomplished, fully accomplished, by the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of the incarnate Son of God. He who was "in the form of God" became a man; was "made under the law" which man had violated; had the iniquities of man laid on him by the Supreme Judge; yielded an obedience to the law, absolutely perfect as to principle, extent, and continuance; "was made a curse" for man; endured the very evils which are the

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

manifestation of the displeasure of God against man's sin, the result of his violation of the holy, just, and good law; and became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. The law was more honoured in the obedience of its precepts and endurance of its sanctions by him who is "God manifest in the flesh," than it had been dishonoured by the sin of man. "The Lord was well pleased for his righteousness' sake," because by it "he magnified the law, and made it honourable." He "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." He "finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness."¹ On the ground of what he has done and suffered, the just in the room of the unjust, the just God is the justifier of the ungodly believing in him. It has become a righteous thing with God to forgive the sin and save the sinner.² Thus we see how the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of our Lord, make the pardon of sin and the salvation of sinners consistent with the perfection of the divine character and the principles of the divine government.

But the atonement is intended and fitted not only to remove the judicial displeasure, but the moral disapprobation, of God from those who are interested in its saving efficacy. By the atonement, according to the arrangements of the "covenant ordered in all things and sure," is secured to the chosen of God the communication of that divine influence which is necessary to transform the character, and make him who is the proper object of God's moral disapprobation the object of his holy complacency. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law," that we might receive not only the blessing of Abraham, a free and full justification by faith, but also that we might receive the promised Spirit by believing.³ And still further, it is

¹ Isa. xlii. 21 ; Heb. ix. 26 ; Dan. ix. 24.

² 1 John i. 9.

³ Gal. iii. 14, 15.

the exhibition of the divine character, made in the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Christ, as this is brought before the mind in a plain, well-accredited revelation, that is the grand instrument, in the hand of the divine Spirit, in creating men anew in Christ Jesus unto good works; in bringing them into a mode of thinking, and feeling, and acting, that is in accordance with his mind and will, and therefore the object of his complacent approbation. As the restoration of man to the friendship of God, in the sense of his becoming the object of the divine moral complacency, is the result of his restoration to the image of God, it is enough to have generally referred to the subject here. Its more full illustration will naturally come to be attended to under some of the subsequent divisions of our subject.

It is time now that we observe that the reconciliation between God and man must be mutual. The sinner's enmity against God must be removed, as well as God's judicial displeasure against the sinner; and while God regards the saved sinner with complacent approbation, he must be made to cherish reciprocal affections of supreme veneration, esteem, love, and confidence towards God. The penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of our Lord are intended, are calculated, and are found, in fact, to be effectual for gaining these ends. Man was led away from God by the suspicion infused into his mind by the father of lies, that God did not wish to make him as happy as he might be,—that by the commands and threatenings of his law he threw obstructions in the way of his being free and happy; and now, in his guilty and depraved state, the knowledge that God condemns him on account of sin, and the deep feeling that the requisitions of his law, though just, are in direct opposition to the strongest propensities of his nature, lead him to regard God with settled aversion. Nothing can

change this state of mind but a just view of the divine character, especially of the holy benignity of that character. I must know and believe the love of God before I can cordially love him. I must see him to be lovely, I must see him to be kind. No manifestation of the divine character will serve this purpose but that which is made in the atonement of Christ. There is no power but the power of Christ's death, which can bring home a human heart to God. "Common mercies of God, though they have a *leading* faculty to repentance, yet the rebellious heart will not be led by them. The judgments of God, public or personal, though they should drive us to God, yet the heart unchanged runs the further from him. Do we not see it by ourselves and other sinners about us? They look not at all towards him that smites, much less do they return; or if any more serious thoughts of returning arise upon the surprise of an affliction, how soon do they vanish! either the stroke abating, or the heart by time growing hard and senseless under it. Indeed, where it is renewed and brought in by Christ, then all other things have a sanctifying influence, according to their quality, to stir up a Christian to seek after fuller communion, closer walk, and nearer access to God. But leave out Christ, Christ crucified, and all other means work not this way: neither the works nor the word of God sounded in his ear, 'Return, return,' will bring him near. Let the rod speak too, to make the cry louder, still the wicked will do wickedly; will not hearken to the voice of God; will not see the hand of God, though lifted up; will not be persuaded to lay aside enmity, or seek for reconciliation."¹ No, till they are made to see HIM on the cross as a high altar, "lifted up" as the victim of human guilt, bearing and bearing away the sins of the world, they will never be drawn to God. Whenever they are made in the

¹ Leighton.

faith of the truth to see that "in this was manifested the love of God, in that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that," through his being the propitiation for our sins, "we should live through him," then, and not till then, they learn to "love him who first loved them," who thus loved them.¹ They cannot doubt the kindness of Him who "spared not his own Son, but delivered him" up as a sacrifice in their room. The weapons of rebellion drop out of their hand, the jealousies of guilt are banished from their heart; and as enmity is destroyed by the view of the divine character given in the atonement, when apprehended in the faith of the truth, so it is principally by the same exhibition of the divine character being brought more fully and kept habitually before the mind, that all the holy affections of divine friendship on the part of the reconciled sinner are excited and strengthened so as to become leading constituents of the character, every-day principles of action.

Our illustration of this part of the subject would be defective, did we not add that the destruction of the enmity, and the cultivation of this holy friendship, is not only effected chiefly by the instrumentality of the faith of the truth respecting the penal, vicarious, expiatory death of Christ; but, as we have already had occasion to remark, that that divine influence which gives to this instrumentality all its efficacy, is an influence which never could have found its way to the corrupted human heart, but for the atonement of Christ, and the communication of which to all the chosen of God is secured by that atonement.

Let us here again pause for a little, and inquire, Have we *thus* been brought to God? Have we from a state of hostility been brought into a state of reconciliation? The question is not, Has an atonement which lies at the foundation of a reconciliation been made? That is beyond all

¹ 1 John iv. 9, 19.

question. The substance of all the typical shadows of the legal atonement is to be found in the sacrifice of Christ: "Christ, our paschal lamb," "the Lamb of God," "has been sacrificed for us." There is no need of asking if that sacrifice of atonement be an adequate one. "If the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself to God without spot, purge the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?" The only fit judge of its adequacy has most explicitly declared his satisfaction with it, by raising the self-devoted victim from the dust of earth, and setting him on the throne of the universe, "giving him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God."¹ The "seventy weeks" have long ago been accomplished; and reconciliation has been made for iniquity, by full satisfaction being yielded to the requisitions of the offended justice and violated law of God.

There is no need of asking if this reconciliation be intended for me. Who shall enjoy the saving results of this reconciliation is known only to God, can be known only to God, except in the case of those who make their election sure by making sure their calling; who, by accepting the reconciliation, obtain experimental evidence that they are reconciled. But nothing is plainer than that this reconciliation, and the blessings flowing from it, were intended to be, and are in fact, freely offered to all who hear the gospel; and who that knows anything of the character of him who makes the offer, dare express or even harbour a doubt as to that offer being a most sincere and unequivocal one? The satisfaction made was perfect satisfaction. The law could demand no more. The atonement is an infinite atonement: Christ, the incarnate, only-

¹ 1 Cor. v. 7; Heb. ix. 13, 14; 1 Pet. i. 21.

begotten, “suffered for sin, the just One in the room of the unjust.” For every human being then, however guilty and depraved, to whom the gospel comes, there is reconciliation through Christ, if he will but gladly and gratefully receive what is freely given him of God.

Men have foolishly and impiously made questions on these points ; but there is no room—blessed be God that it is so!—no room for rational doubts here. If there were, where, oh where, were the hopes of any of the children of men ? Were not an all-perfect atonement, a complete reconciliation in the word of the truth of the gospel, held out for the acceptance of “mankind-sinners as such,” as our fathers of the Secession loved to say, that gospel would be anything rather than “glad tidings of great joy to all people.” Yes, “God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them ; for he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”¹

But it is a question, and a most important one,—let us, every one of us, endeavour to resolve it in reference to himself,—Have we received the reconciliation ? It is absolutely certain that Christ has “made peace by the blood of his cross ;” but have we through this pacification, as individuals, been brought into a state of peace with God ? Have we reason to believe that the blood of our paschal Lamb has been so sprinkled on us, as that the destroying angel shall not touch us ? Have we reason to believe that we are delivered from the curse through him having been made a curse for us ? We are, questionless, in this most desirable state, if we have believed the truth as it is in Jesus. And with equal certainty may it be affirmed, we are not in this state if we have not believed the truth as it is in Jesus : “He that believeth in him is

¹ 2 Cor. v. 21.

not condemned ;” he shall never come into condemnation : “ he that believeth not is condemned already,” and, continuing an unbeliever, “ the wrath of God abideth on him.”¹

But how am I to know if I believe the truth, the faith of which savingly interests me in the reconciling efficacy of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Jesus Christ ? To this question many satisfactory answers might be given, affording the individual the means of resolving the awfully important question ; but I content myself with that which grows out of our subject. If you are in your minds no more enemies to God through wicked works, but, on the contrary, have his love shed abroad in your hearts ; if you love God, and love him just because he is God,—that is, holy love, infinitely excellent, infinitely kind ; if you cordially acquiesce in, if you supremely approve and admire, the divine method of salvation, “ grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life ;”² if you are reconciled to the divine law, accounting it in all things to be right, “ holy, just, and good,”—esteeming entire conformity to it, as exemplified in the character and conduct of our Lord, as your highest honour and happiness as well as duty ; if you are reconciled to the divine providential arrangements, however opposite to your natural inclinations, saying, “ Good is the will of the Lord,”—Lord, what thou wilt, when thou wilt, how thou wilt ; if there is a distinctly begun and steadily progressive conformity of your mind and will to the mind and will of God ; then have you reason to conclude, not only that reconciliation has been made for iniquity, but that you have received that reconciliation.

And if we have thus received the reconciliation, what a debt of gratitude do we owe to Him who has reconciled us to himself by Christ Jesus ; to Christ Jesus, who hath thus brought us to God ; and to the good Spirit, who in our

¹ John iii. 18, 36.

² Rom. v. 21.

case has rendered the ministration of reconciliation effectual, and has saved us from the fearful consequences of receiving this grace of God in vain! Let this gratitude manifest itself in leading us habitually to cherish the sentiments and pursue the conduct which becomes us as restored prodigal children, pardoned rebel subjects. Let us, constrained "by the mercies of God, present ourselves to Him as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service, our rational worship." Let us serve him without fear, "in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives;" "walking at liberty, keeping his commandments;" serving him "in newness of spirit," and "not in the oldness of the letter;" making it evident, from the manner in which we do and suffer his will, that we are not slaves, but sons; that "we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Let us show that we really do "know the joyful sound, by walking in the light of the divine countenance, rejoicing in God's name all the day, being exalted in his righteousness."¹

If there be any here who have not received the reconciliation, what shall I say to them? I cannot bid them hope, remaining in their present circumstances. No; there is, there can be, neither happiness nor hope in a state of enmity with God. I might represent to them the horrors of their condition, the still greater horrors of their prospects, and expostulate with them on the shocking unnaturalness as well as inconceivable sinfulness of their conduct, in being enemies of the most excellent and amiable and benignant of beings. But, instead of doing this, I shall at once urge them to "lay hold on the hope that is set before even them in the gospel." To the human being within these walls

¹ Rom. xii. 1; Luke i. 74, 75; Ps. cxix. 45; Rom. vii. 6, viii. 15; Ps. lxxxix. 15, 16.

most characterized by enmity against God, most under the influence of the carnal mind, God is now proclaiming, "Acquaint thyself with ME, and be at peace; so shall good come to thee." Behold me! Behold me! I am glorious in holiness; but I am rich in mercy. I can by no means clear the guilty; but I have set forth Christ Jesus a propitiation, through faith in his blood. I am a just God; but I am the Saviour. I am just; but I am the justifier of him who believes in Jesus. As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of him who dieth. Return to me; I have redeemed you. Return, return. I, even I, am he who blotteth out your transgression for my own sake, and I will not remember your sin. Be reconciled to God. Oh, be persuaded, that remaining far from him you must perish! Oh, be persuaded, that it is good for you to draw near to God!¹

And say not, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?" Who shall bring me near before him? How can I stand before thee, Holy Lord God? Behold "one like unto the Son of man," but in reality the Son of God; yet your brother, your kinsman-Redeemer. He has "engaged his heart to approach to Jehovah" in your name, and has opened a way by which you may come into his favourable presence. Hear him proclaiming, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man can come to the Father but by me." "His blood cleanseth us from all sin." He is "able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by him;" and "him that cometh to Him he will in nowise cast out." He is "the power of God unto salvation." He is "the arm," "the strength of Jehovah." Lay hold of him, and "make peace with Jehovah, and he will make peace with you." Receive the message of mercy, and you will find that he is

¹ Heb. vi. 18; Job xxii. 21; Ex. xv. 11; Eph. ii. 4; Ex. xxxiv. 7; Rom. iii. 25; Isa. xlv. 21; Rom. iii. 27; Ezek. xviii. 32, xxxiii. 11; Isa. xlv. 22, xliii. 25; 2 Cor. v. 20; Ps. lxxiii. 27, 28.

“pacified towards you for all the iniquities which you have done;” that he is waiting to be gracious, and ready to bless you “with all heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.”¹ Persist in your enmity, and you are undone, utterly undone, undone for ever.

§ 3. *To bring men to likeness to God.*

I proceed now to remark, in the third place, that it was a design of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Christ, to bring men from a state of moral dissimilarity into a state of moral resemblance to God. Man in his primeval state, as he had just views of the divine character and will, and enjoyed the favour of God, regarding him with sentiments of supreme veneration, confidence, and love, was also, in the great lineaments of his moral character, assimilated to God. “God created man in his own image, in the likeness of God created he him;” and we know that image consists “in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.”² His mind was in entire accordance with the mind of God, his will with the will of God, so far as they were made known to him. He had no views inconsistent with the mind of God, which is truth; no inclinations opposed to the will of God, which is righteousness.

It is altogether otherwise with man the sinner. He is not only ignorant of God, and in a state of enmity with him; but the whole frame of his sentiments and feelings is in direct contrariety to the divine mind and will; he being the image, not of his Father in heaven, but of his fallen earthly father. “God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all;” but “the eyes of the understanding” of irregenerate man “are darkened,” nay, he is “darkness,”—

¹ Mic. vi. 6; 1 Sam. vi. 20; Jer. xxx. 21; John xiv. 6; 1 John i. 7; Heb. vii. 25; John vi. 37; Isa. xxvii. 5; Ezek. xvi. 63; Eph. i. 3.

² Gen. i. 27; Eph. iv. 24; Col. iii. 10.

by ignorance alienated from, opposed to, God. "God is love," but mankind are "hateful," "full of hatred," hating God, and hating each other. God is holy, but they are unholy. God is true and faithful, but they are the children of him who is a liar as well as a murderer from the beginning.¹ And this opposition of character is manifested in the conduct of irregenerate men. They are continually engaged in an attempt to counterwork God, following a rule, seeking an end, entirely different from, entirely irreconcilable with, the rule and end of him, "of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things."

It is the purpose of God from among the ruins of the fall to create anew a "peculiar people," to form a people for himself, that they may show forth his praise. It is his design to restore in them that moral image of himself which sin has defaced; and the grand means for gaining this end are the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of his own Son.

That the atonement was intended to secure, and has indeed secured, to all who are by faith interested in its saving efficacy, sanctification as well as justification, restoration to the divine image as well as to the divine favour, is a doctrine very clearly revealed in Scripture. "God condemned sin in the flesh, by sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin"—that is, as a sacrifice for sin. God thus condemned sin, "which the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh;" and the consequence is, "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us believers, walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."² "Our old man was crucified with Christ, that we should no longer be the slaves of sin."³ "For this cause," says the Saviour, "I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through

¹ 1 John i. 5; Rom. i. 21; Eph. iv. 18, v. 8; John viii. 44.

² Rom. viii. 3, 4.

³ Rom. vi. 6.

the truth.”¹ “He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”² “Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for her; that he might sanctify and cleanse her by the washing of water through the word; that he might present her to himself a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.”³ “Ye know that ye were not redeemed by such corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He his own self bare our sins in his own body on, or rather to, the tree, that we, being dead to sin, might live to righteousness.”⁴ There can be no doubt of the fact, then; but how the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Christ were necessary for, how they are effectual to, the gaining this end, is an important and interesting subject of inquiry. To understand in theory the influence of the atonement on sanctification, is no inconsiderable attainment in Christian theology; to know it in experience, is the very essence of Christian godliness.

In the few observations I am about to make on the subject, I shall endeavour equally to avoid rash speculation as to the mode of the efficacy of the atonement—an “intruding into those things which men have not seen,” cannot see, for God has not revealed them,—and that “voluntary humility” which prevents an explicit avowal of what Scripture does reveal, from a fear of opposing the prejudices or exciting the dislike of the wise men of this world. The whole truth, we apprehend, on the subject may be stated in the three following propositions. By the atonement, as satisfaction to divine justice for sin, and the

¹ John xvii. 19.

² Eph. iv. 25-27.

³ Tit. ii. 14.

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 18, 19, ii. 24.

meritorious ground of the Redeemer's exaltation, obstacles otherwise insurmountable are removed out of the way of the sinner being restored to the divine image; by the atonement, in connection with covenant engagements, or the purpose of mercy, the communication of a divine influence necessary and sufficient for this purpose is secured; and by the atonement, as the subject of a divine revelation, an appropriate instrumentality is furnished for accomplishing this end.

The condemning sentence of the divine law was one obstacle in the way of the restoration of the divine image, insurmountable by all human, all created means. No man, no angel, could make satisfaction to divine justice for sinful man. Till this is made, it consists not with the wisdom, holiness, justice, and faithfulness of God, to bestow on the sinner that sanctifying influence, the communication of which to any created being is the highest proof that he is the object of the kind regard of Him who confers it. Christ giving himself for us as a sacrifice, according to the benignant will of his Father, by which the law was magnified and made honourable, makes it a righteous thing for God to give us, through him and for his sake, all good things; and among these good things, that greatest of all spiritual blessings, being indeed the sum and substance of them all—the good, sanctifying, transforming Spirit.

The power of Satan is another obstacle in the way of the restoration of the sinner to holiness, in restoration to the image of God,—an obstacle which no created agency could have removed. That power is destroyed, and could only have been destroyed, by our Lord, the stronger Man, who “enters the house of the strong man and spoils him of his goods.” This work is accomplished in the exercise of Christ's mediatorial power and authority. That power and authority were conferred on him as the reward of that obe-

dience unto death, in which he accomplished the work of atonement. Christ, the just One, having suffered to death for sins in the room of sinners, went to heaven, sat down on the right hand of God, principalities and powers, fallen and unfallen, being put under him, so that the prey may now be taken from the mighty, and the captive of the terrible one be delivered.

But this is not all. By the atonement, in connection with the purpose of mercy, is secured to all the chosen of God, the communication of that divine influence which is at once absolutely necessary and completely sufficient to restore man to the divine image. Such an influence is absolutely necessary to the production of true holiness in the human heart. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." "We are sanctified by the Spirit of our God."¹ The connection of the communication of the Spirit with the atonement is stated in such passages as the following:—"The Spirit was not yet given, for Jesus was not yet glorified." "It is expedient that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go away, I will send him." "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit by faith." The Spirit is the Spirit of faith, and "it is given" to men "on the behalf of Christ to believe in his name." It belongs to him as the perfected Captain of our salvation, the Prince and the Saviour, in virtue of the promises made before the world began, to "give" to his redeemed ones "repentance," the new mind,—just another word for the restored image of God,—as well as "the remission of sins."²

Finally, by the atonement securing the scriptural revelation of the divine character and will, and being itself indeed

¹ John vi. 63; 1 Cor. vi. 11.

² John vii. 39, xvi. 7; Gal. iii. 13, 14; Phil. i. 29; Acts v. 31.

the great subject of that revelation, an appropriate instrumentality is furnished for the sanctification of man, or, in other words, bringing him to God, by restoring him to the divine image. It is by the truth about God, known and believed, that men are conformed to God's image. They are "sanctified by the truth." They "are transformed by the renewing of the mind."¹ In a former part of this discourse, I showed how, without the atonement, no such revelation of the divine character as would transform man could have been given to man. The view given us of the character and will of God in the atonement, the great subject of divine revelation, is such as, just in the degree in which it is apprehended in its meaning and evidence, just in the degree in which it is understood and believed, must conform us to God. "He gave himself for his Church, that he might purify and cleanse her by the word;"² of which word his giving himself is the great subject; and it is this which gives it its aptitude for cleansing and renewing the human heart. "Let any person," it has been justly said, "be brought to understand correctly, and to believe cordially, that part of the divine testimony; as a necessary consequence his soul must experience a most momentous moral transformation. He will learn to love God, and to confide in him, as his reconciled Father; he will feel emotions of unfeigned and fervent gratitude for such a marvellous manifestation of kindness; and he will feel sincerely desirous to testify his gratitude, by putting on that moral image of God which in absolute perfection was manifested in his incarnate Son, now seen and felt to be the beauty and dignity of the soul, and by obeying the divine law, which he now sees and feels to be indeed 'holy, just, and good.'"

¹ John xvii. 17; Rom. xii. 2.

² Eph. v. 26.

§ 4. *To bring men to fellowship with God.*

I proceed now to remark, in the fourth place, that the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Christ were designed to bring men from a state of alienation and non-intercourse into a state of habitual favourable fellowship with God. Fellowship with God is a phrase to which I am afraid many attach very indefinite, confused, incorrect ideas. The term fellowship indicates either common possession or mutual intercourse. In the first sense, fellowship with God means the thinking, willing, choosing, and enjoying in common with God, and is, in fact, just what we have been speaking of under the name of conformity to God's image. In the second sense, fellowship with God means intercourse with God—interchange of thoughts and sentiments; intercourse maintained on his part by his communication of gracious influence and saving blessings, and on the part of man, by the exercise of devout affections.

When the Christian is enabled firmly to believe the truth as it is in Jesus, confidently to rely on the Saviour, humbly to hope for the grace that is to be brought to him at the coming of our Lord Jesus, patiently to bear affliction, triumphantly to conquer temptation, it is in consequence of divine communications. Good and perfect gifts come down to him from above; and the reception of these gifts draws out from the heart of the Christian holy aspirations of gratitude and desire, which find their expression in thanksgiving and prayer. These bring down new supplies of celestial influence; and these influences, in their turn, excite more enlarged wishes for spiritual blessings, stimulating the very appetite which they gratify. There is thus an ever-growing interchange of influences and desires, and of prayers and blessings.¹

¹ Balmer.

This is the sense in which we use the word fellowship with God in the present remarks.

Man, in his original condition, lived in this state of intercourse with God. Adam, as well as Enoch, "walked with God;" and though we have but a few fragments of paradisaical history, we cannot doubt that, still more than in the case of Moses, God spake to Adam "as a man to his friend." Sin interrupted this intercourse. Man's guilt made it inconsistent with God's holiness, and justice, and truth, to have intercourse with man as his friend; and man's depravity equally unfitted and indisposed him for acceptable intercourse with God. The language of the human heart in its unchanged state is, "Depart from me, I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." "What have I to do with thee, thou Holy One?"

To re-open this intercourse, and to lay a foundation for its permanent maintenance, is one great purpose of the atonement of our Lord. And it is obviously well fitted to gain this object. It has gained it in the case of all who, through believing, have obtained a personal interest in its saving effects.

We have already, in effect, shown how this is accomplished. It is by producing reconciliation and resemblance that the atonement opens up the way for communion. "Between parties at variance there can be no agreeable or affectionate intercourse without reconciliation. Between persons whose principles and tastes, whose dispositions and pursuits, have no congeniality, there cannot exist an intimate or permanent friendship; and even their casual intercourse must be comparatively heartless and joyless. 'Can two walk together except they be agreed?'"¹ We have seen how "God is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their trespasses; seeing that he has made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might

¹ Balmer.

be made the righteousness of God in him ;” how he brings men, naturally afar off, nigh by the blood of the cross ; how he “abolishes the enmity thereby ;” how the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ on the conscience purifies the heart, and sheds abroad there the love of God, and all its blessed holy fruits.¹

Our heavenly Father, regarding his adopted, regenerated children with ineffable, complacential delight, cannot but take pleasure in giving them tokens of his love ; and they, on the other hand, cannot be happy if their fellowship be not with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. He comes to them through the mediation of his Son. They go to him through the same mediation. He, “for the great love wherewith he loves them, blesses them with heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus ; and they, “by one Spirit through him, have access to the Father,” in the full assured belief that “his blood cleanseth from all sin,” and that “he, ever living to make intercession for them, is able to save them to the uttermost.” Knowing that they “have a great High Priest for them passed into the heavens,” they habitually “come boldly to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in the time of need.”²

This intercourse is chiefly maintained through the instituted means of Christian worship, secret, private, and public. It is in reference to these that Jehovah promises to come to his people, and bless them, and supply their need ; and it is in reference to these that they say, “We will go into his tabernacles, we will worship at his footstool ;” “then will I go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy ;” in Bethel, in his own house, God Almighty met with me and blessed me ; “it is good for me to draw near to God.”³

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19, 21 ; Col. i. 20 ; Eph. ii. 15 ; Heb. ix. 14.

² Eph. ii. 18 ; John i. 7 ; Heb. ii. 25, iv. 15, 16.

³ Ps. cxxxii. 7, xliii. 4, lxxiii. 28 ; Gen. xlviii. 3.

We have thus seen, that the great design of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of Jesus Christ, is to bring men to God ; from a state of ignorance and error into a state of true knowledge ; from a state of enmity into a state of friendship ; from a state of dissimilarity into a state of resemblance ; from a state of non-intercourse into a state of fellowship. We have seen that the atonement actually does all this ; and we have seen too, in some measure, *how* it does all this.

This glorious design it gains to a certain extent, in the case of every believer, even in the present world. This glorious design it will gain in absolute perfection, with regard to every believer ; with regard to the whole company of believers, in the heavenly state. Having given himself for them, and having purified them by his Spirit, through his word and providential dispensations, he will collect them all together (there is to be “a gathering together at his coming”), and present them to God, his Father and their Father, his God and their God, “a glorious Church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ;” saying, “Behold me, and the children thou hast given me ;” “not one of them is lost.” Then will it appear how careful the good Shepherd has been of his charge ; “how faithful to Him who appointed him.” They are all raised up at the last day, near, very near to God ; so far as the difference of nature admits, “holy as he is holy, perfect as he is perfect ;” even their bodies fashioned like unto the glorious body of him who is God manifest in flesh. Then shall be fulfilled, in all its extent of meaning, that promise which cheered the heart of the Saviour amid the toils and sorrows, the agony and blood of the great work of expiation : “Since he has made his soul a sacrifice for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and

shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he has borne their iniquities. Therefore will I give him the great for his portion, and he shall have the strong for his spoil, because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." With gladness and rejoicing shall his redeemed ones be brought; they shall enter into the King's palace, "and there they shall abide." They shall be for ever with the Lord; like him, seeing him as he is; beholding, and, as far as it is possible, sharing his glory and his blessedness. And all this is the result of Christ the just One suffering for sins in the room of sinners.¹

And now let us once more, each for himself, seriously propose the question, Have I thus, through the atoning death of Christ, been brought to God? Have I been conformed to his image? Have I been introduced into his fellowship? Have I been delivered from this present evil world through Christ giving himself for me? Have I been redeemed from my vain conversation received by tradition from my fathers? Have I indeed been born again? Have I received "a divine nature?" Have I become "a new creature?" Is my mind conformed to God's mind—my will to God's will? And is my conformity to God increasing? Am I growing in knowledge, and purity, and love? Am I becoming more and more a partaker of his holiness? Am I daily receiving spiritual benefits from God, and rendering daily to him the expressions of a grateful mind, a loving heart? And can I say, "Truly my fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ; my conversation is in heaven; my affections are set on things above?"

The person who is a stranger to the state and exercises of mind described in these expressions, whatever profession

¹ Eph. v. 27; Isa. viii. 18; Heb. ii. 13; Isa. liii. 10-12.

he may make, has not received the atonement. As yet Christ has died in vain, so far as he is concerned. He is not yet brought to God. Let all of us beware of resting short of this conformity to, this fellowship with, God. Let us beware of resting in speculation, in profession, in formal worship, in external obedience. Let us especially put far away from us the monstrous thought, that we can be enjoying the divine favour and fellowship through the atonement of Christ, while living in sin. To expect this is to expect an utter impossibility; is to impose on ourselves by a damnable delusion. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with darkness? What concord has Christ with Belial?" "If we say that we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another"—that is, he and we have indeed communion,—"and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."¹

Let the conviction be every day deepened, that coming to God in the way of assimilation and fellowship is absolutely necessary to our true and final happiness; and that this conformity to, this communion with God, can be obtained only "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Yes, my brethren, it is in the faith of the truth respecting the great atonement that the sinner finds "redemption from all his iniquities." There is no possibility of being conformed to God till we are reconciled to God: it is at the cross that the pilgrim loses his burden; and there is no being reconciled to God without being conformed to Him.

Let all those who, through the power of the atonement, and by the faith of the truth, have obtained some measure of conformity to God, and of favourable intercourse with him, seek larger and still larger measures of those spiritual

¹ 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15; 1 John i. 6, 7.

blessings from the same source, through the same channel. Let them never forget that they must owe their sanctification as well as their justification, their new character as well as their new state, to God sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, a sacrifice for sin,—to Christ the just One suffering for sins in the room of the unjust. Christ, “Christ crucified,” is all in all. “All things are of God,” through his Son. “Of God are we in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”¹ To him be all the glory.

V. THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS SUFFERINGS.

The consequences of our Lord’s penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings come now to be considered. They are thus stated by the apostle: “Christ the just One, having suffered for sins in the room of the unjust, that he might bring them to God,” was “put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who sometime were disobedient; and having risen from the dead, he went into heaven, where he is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him.”

The Bible has often been represented as a book full of obscurities and difficulties; by infidels, who wish to disprove its divine origin; by Roman Catholics, who need an argument to prove the necessity of tradition on which their system rests, and an apology for their apparently impious and paradoxical conduct, in withholding a confessedly divine revelation from the unrestrained perusal of the common people, and endeavouring to keep it covered by the veil of a dead language; and by mere nominal Christians among Protestants, who equally need an excuse for their habitual

¹ Col. iii. 11; 2 Cor. v. 18; 1 Cor. i. 30.

neglect of a volume which they admit to be of divine authority, and profess to regard as the ultimate rule of religious faith and moral duty. And if the Bible were really so full of obscurity and difficulty, if it were the ambiguous and unintelligible book it has been represented, neither the careless Protestant nor the cautious Catholic would be much to be blamed, except for inconsistency. And even with this minor fault the infidel would not be justly chargeable; for if he can make out his premises, that the Bible is an unintelligible book, there can be little difficulty in admitting his conclusion, that it is not a divine one. A book full of darkness cannot come from Him who "is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all;" and it is certainly useless to read what it is impossible to understand.

But it is not true that the Holy Scriptures are full of obscurities and difficulties. The Bible, generally speaking, is a very plain book. It would not be easy to find a book of its size, on its subjects, where there is so much level to the apprehension of ordinary understandings. No person who sits down to the study of it with an honest wish to apprehend its statements, will find any great difficulty in discovering what are the doctrines it unfolds, or what are the duties it enjoins. "The commandment of the Lord is *pure*,"¹ that is, clear as the light of heaven, "and it enlightens the eyes." But though the Bible is not *full* of obscurities and difficulties, there are obscurities and difficulties in it. It is with the great light of the moral as of the natural world,—the whole of its disc is not equally lustrous. There are spots in the sun; but he must be very blind, or very perverse, who should on that account maintain that the sun is not a luminous body at all, and insist that it gives no light, and that, if it rays forth anything, it rays forth darkness.

¹ Ps. xix. 8. "Clarum, dilucidum."—ROSENMÜLLER.

On the other hand, he who insists that there are no spots on the sun, and he who insists that there are no difficulties in the Bible, equally prove that they are very superficial observers or very prejudiced judges. That in writings so ancient as the Hebrew Scriptures, published originally in a state of society so different from that which at present prevails, among a people whose language has long ceased to be spoken, and whose laws and customs and manners have little resemblance to ours, there should be difficulties, was naturally to be expected; and indeed this could not have been prevented without a miracle. But these obscurities attach themselves to comparatively but few passages; and the difficulties to which they give origin are gradually diminishing and disappearing as the knowledge of the sacred languages, antiquities, and criticism makes progress; and with regard to those which remain, there are two considerations that deserve remark: the first, that in no case is there uncertainty cast on any of the leading facts or doctrines or laws of revelation by these obscurities and difficulties; and the second, that in almost every case, though in some passages there may be words or phrases, the precise import or reference of which it may be difficult or impossible to determine with certainty, these passages are found notwithstanding replete with important instruction.

These remarks are applicable to the passage of Scripture to which our attention has for some time been directed. The observation of the Apostle Peter respecting his "beloved brother Paul," is applicable to himself. In his epistles "there are some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned and the unstable wrest to their own destruction,"¹ and this is one of them. Few passages have received a greater variety of interpretations; and he would prove more satisfactorily his self-confidence than his wisdom, who

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16.

should assert that *his* interpretation was undoubtedly the true one.¹ Yet, though we should not be able to determine with absolute certainty who those spirits in prison are, and when, and where, and how, and for what purpose, Christ went and preached to them; and whatever opinion we may adopt as most probable on these subjects, no Christian doctrine, no Christian duty, is affected by our uncertainty or by our opinion. Even were we holding, what appears to us the least probable one, that the words teach us that our Lord, during his disembodied state, went to the region of separate souls, and made a communication of some kind to its inhabitants, either to such of them as were "in safe keeping," in paradise, or "in prison," in Gehenna, they would give no countenance to the delusive dreams either of the Roman Catholic respecting purgatory, or of the Universalist concerning the possibility of favourably altering the condition of men after they have left the present state: they would merely state an insulated fact, nowhere else referred to in Scripture, and from which no legitimate consequence can be deduced at all inconsistent with any other portion of revealed truth; and though we should never obtain satisfactory information on the points referred to, how replete with truth and holy influence is the sentence (vers. 18-22), of which one or two clauses are to us obscure, perhaps unintelligible, "how profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness!" It would be very presumptuous to expect that I should be able to remove entirely difficulties which have baffled the attempts of the ablest interpreters. Yet I believe that patient, careful, honest, persevering, prayerful study of any portion of God's word, is never unproductive of some good effect; and I must say, after the experience of forty years'

¹ "The passage is indeed extremely obscure; and I have seen no explanation of it that is free from objection."—ARCHBISHOP WHATELY.

study of the Bible, that in inquiring into the meaning of Scripture, "darkness has often been made light before me, crooked things straight, rough places plain."¹

The consequences of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of our Lord, plainly divide themselves into two classes. First, such as took place *not* in heaven; for that is all that we yet consider ourselves as warranted to say of them; whether on the earth or under the earth, may perhaps appear in the course of our illustrations: "He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; he by it went and preached to the spirits in prison, who sometime were disobedient;"—and secondly, such as took place in heaven: "Having risen from the dead, he went into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him."

§ 1. *He became dead in the flesh, quickened in the Spirit, and went and preached to the spirits in prison.*

Let us attend to these two classes of the consequences of our Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings in their order; and first, of those which took place not in heaven.

Some interpreters consider only the words rendered "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit," as descriptive of the consequences of our Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings. What follows they consider as referring to something which he did in or by the same Spirit by which he was quickened, on another occasion altogether, at a former period, so long gone by as the antediluvian times. They interpret the words descriptive of the consequences of our Lord's sufferings for sins in the room of sinners thus: He was violently put to death, in his body, or in his human nature; but he was quickened, restored to life, by the Spirit,—that is, either by the Holy Ghost, the third

¹ See note C.

person of the Holy Trinity, or by his divine nature, the spirit of holiness, according to which he is the Son of God, in contradistinction to his being the son of David according to the flesh,—that Spirit by which he was justified,—that eternal Spirit through which he offered himself to God, a sacrifice without spot or blemish. And the remaining part of the statement they consider as equivalent to, By the Holy Spirit inspiring Noah as a preacher of righteousness, or in his divine nature, through the same instrumentality, he in the antediluvian times “went and preached,”—either a pleonastic expression for preached, or intimating that he came from heaven in his divine influence and operation, as he came to paradise in the cool of the day, came down to see the tower of Babel, came down on Mount Sinai at the giving of the law,—made known the will of God to the men of that generation, who were *then* “spirits in prison,” condemned men, doomed to punishment for their sins, and kept as in a prison till the time of execution, when the flood came ; or who are *now* spirits in the prison of hell, kept along with the evil angels, “under chains of darkness, to the judgment of the great day.”

The sense thus brought out of the words is self-consistent, and not incompatible with any of the facts or doctrines of revelation ; but this mode of interpretation seems to us liable to great, and indeed insurmountable, objections. The words flesh and spirit are plainly opposed to one another. The prepositions *in* and *by* are not in the original. The opposed words¹ are in the same case : they stand plainly in the same relation respectively to the words rendered put to death and quickened,² and that relation should have been expressed in English by the same particle.³ If you give

¹ Σαρκὶ—πνεύματι. Hæc verba pro *in* σαρκὶ *in* πνεύματι et quidem pro adjectivis (adverbiis ?) posita videntur.—STORR.

² θανατωθεὶς. Ζωοποιηθεὶς.

³ See note D.

the rendering, "put to death *in* the flesh," you must give the corresponding rendering, "quickened *in* the spirit;" which would bring out the sense, either 'quickened in his human spirit or soul,' a statement to which it is difficult to attach a distinct meaning, for the soul is not mortal, Christ's spirit did not die, and to continue alive is not the meaning of the original word; or 'quickened in his divine nature,' a statement obviously absurd and false, as implying that He who is "the life," the living One, can be quickened, either in the sense of restored from a state of death, or endowed with a larger measure of vitality. On the other hand, if you adopt the rendering of our translators in the second clause, "quickened *by* the Spirit," then you must render in accordance with it the first clause, 'put to death *by* the *flesh*.' If by the Spirit you understand the divine nature of our Lord, by the flesh you must understand the human nature, which makes the expression an absurdity. On the other hand, if you understand by the Spirit the Holy Ghost, then by flesh you must understand "mankind,"—put to death by men, but restored to life by God the Spirit. This interpretation, though giving a consistent and true sense,—the sense so forcibly expressed in Peter's words to the Jews, "whom *ye* crucified; whom *God* raised from the dead,"—is forbidden by the usage of the language. Then there can be no doubt that there does appear something very unnatural in introducing our Lord, in the midst of what is plainly a description of the results of his atoning sufferings, as having in the Spirit, by which he was quickened after he had been put to death, gone many centuries before, in the antediluvian age, to preach to an ungodly world; and there is just as little doubt that the only meaning that the words will bear without violence being done them is, that it was when he had been put to death in the flesh, and quickened in the Spirit, or by the Spirit, whatever that

may mean, he went and preached ; and that “the spirits,” whoever they be, were “in prison,” whatever that may mean, when he preached to them.

These are not all the difficulties connected with this interpretation, which may be termed the common Protestant interpretation of the passage ; but they are quite sufficient to convince us that it is untenable, and to induce the apprehension that it would never have been resorted to but from its supposed necessity to destroy the shadow of support which another mode of interpretation gives to some of the errors of Popery, which have, by that “deceivableness of unrighteousness” which characterizes the system, been turned to great account in fettering the minds and plundering the property of the unhappy victims of that masterpiece of imposture and superstition ; or to the soul-endangering dream of Universalism, that there are means of grace of which those who die unforgiven may avail themselves in the separate state, so as to avert the natural results of their living and dying in unbelief and impenitence.

Another class of interpreters consider the whole statement before us as referring to what happened subsequent to, and consequent on, our Lord’s penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings.¹ Some of these consider the event referred to in the words, “He went and preached to the spirits in prison,” as having taken place during the interval between our Lord’s death and resurrection ; others, as having taken place after his resurrection. The first consider the words rendered “having been put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit,” as equivalent to—“having become dead as to his body (a very fair rendering of the words), but continuing alive as to his soul (a sense which the original words will not bear), he in that soul went to the region of separate souls, Hades, the invisible state, and there preached

¹ See note E.

to the spirits in prison, who before were disobedient." The second consider the words referred to as equivalent to—"Being put to death in his human nature, but restored to life by his divine nature, or by the Holy Ghost, he in his resurrection body, which they conceive was not subject to the ordinary laws of matter, or in his new life, went down to the region of separate souls, and there preached to the spirits in prison."

These two classes of interpreters, holding in common that our Lord went down to Hades, are considerably divided as to what was his object in going there, as described or hinted at in the passage before us: one class holding that he went to hell (Gehenna), the place of torment, to proclaim to the fallen angels, who are kept there under chains of darkness, as the spirits in prison (though how *they* could be said to be disobedient in the days of Noah does not appear; and besides, these spirits seem plainly to belong to the same class of beings as "the souls" that were saved, ver. 20),—to proclaim throughout that dismal region his triumph over them and their apostate chief; another class holding that he went to this place of torment to announce his triumph over the power of darkness, and to offer salvation through his death to those human spirits who had died in their sins; a third class holding that he went to purgatory to release those who had been sufficiently improved by their disciplinary sufferings, and to remove them to paradise; and a fourth class, who translate the "spirits in prison,"¹ "the spirits in safe keeping," holding that he went to paradise, the residence of the separate spirits of good men, to announce to them the glad tidings, that the great salvation which had been the object of their faith and hope was now completed.

Each of these varieties of interpretation is attended with

¹ Τοῖς ἐν φυλακῇ πνύμασι.

its own difficulties, which appear to me insuperable. Some of them go upon principles obviously and demonstratively false; and all of them attempt to bring much out of the words which plainly is not in them. To state particularly the objections against them would occupy a good deal of time, and I am afraid would afford little satisfaction and less edification to my hearers. There are, however, common difficulties bearing on them all which seem quite sufficient to warrant us to set them all aside, and which may be stated in a sentence or two. It seems incredible, if such events as are darkly hinted at rather than distinctly described in these words thus interpreted had taken place, that we should have no account of them, indeed no certain allusion to them, in any other part of Scripture.¹ It seems quite unaccountable why the separate spirits of those who had lived in the days of Noah, and perished in the deluge, are specially mentioned as those, among the inhabitants of the unseen world, to whom the quickened Redeemer went and preached; the much greater multitude who, before that time, and since that time, had gone down to the land of darkness, being passed by without notice. And what will weigh much with a judicious student of Scripture is, that it is impossible to perceive how these events, supposing them to have taken place, were, as they are represented by the construction of the language to be, the effects of Christ's suffering for sins in the room of sinners, and how these statements at all serve to promote the apostle's practical object, which was to persuade persecuted Christians patiently and cheerfully to submit to sufferings for righteousness' sake, from the

¹ "They that think Christ's soul and godhead preached to spirits while his body lay in the grave, suppose that those spirits knew it whom it concerned. But if it had been necessary for us to know not only Christ's preaching to ourselves but to them, he would surely have more clearly told it us."—RICHARD BAXTER.

consideration exemplified in the case of our Lord, that suffering in a good cause and in a right spirit, however severe, was calculated to lead to the happiest results. No interpretation, we apprehend, can be the right one, which does not correspond with the obvious construction of the passage, and with the avowed design of the writer.

Keeping these general principles steadily in view, I proceed now to state, as briefly and as plainly as I can, what appears to me the probable meaning of this difficult passage: "A passage," as Leighton says, "somewhat obscure in itself, but as it usually falls, made more so by the various fancies and contexts of interpreters aiming or pretending to clear it."

The first consequence of those penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings which Christ, the just One, endured by the appointment of his Father, the righteous Judge, for sins, in the room of the unjust, noticed here is, that he "was put to death in the flesh."¹ The unjust, in whose room he stood, were doomed to death; and he, in bearing their sins, submitted to death, to a violent death, to a form of violent death which, by a divine appointment, marked him as the victim of public justice.² He was with wicked hands crucified, hanged on a tree; and he that was hanged on a tree was declared to be accursed, or to have died as a victim of sin by the hand of public justice. The idea here, however, seems not to be so much the violent nature of the infliction, as its effect, the entire privation of life, and consequently of power. The word seems used as in Rom. vii. 4, "Ye are become dead."³ He became dead in the flesh, he became bodily dead.⁴ He lay an inanimate, powerless corpse in the sepulchre.

¹ Θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκί. Morte affectus, quoad corpus.—KUTTNER.

² Deut. xxi. 23; Gal. iii. 13.

³ Ἐθανατώθητε τῷ νόμῳ—not "ye have been put to death by the law."

⁴ Σαρκικῶς.

But his becoming thus bodily dead and powerless was not more certainly the effect of his penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings, than the second circumstance here mentioned, his “being quickened in the Spirit.” If this refer to his resurrection, we must render it quickened by the Spirit; but we have already seen that, without misinterpretation, it cannot be so rendered. Besides, the resurrection is expressly mentioned in the 21st verse, in connection with the ascension to heaven. To be quickened in the Spirit is to be quickened spiritually, as to be put to death in the flesh is to become dead bodily. This interpretation is quite warranted.¹ The word rendered to be quickened,² literally signifies to be made alive or living. It is used to signify the original communication of life, the restoration of life to the dead, and the communication of a larger measure of life to the living. A consequence of our Lord’s penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings was, that he became spiritually alive and powerful, in a sense and to a degree in which he was not previously, and in which but for these sufferings he never could have become—full of life to be communicated to dead souls, “mighty to save.” He was thus spiritually quickened. “The Father gave him to have life in himself, that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him”—“to all coming to the Father through him.” “All power,” even the power of God, “was given to HIM,” who had been “crucified in weakness;” and by this power he lives and gives life. “The second Adam” thus became “a quickening spirit.” He became, as it were, the receptacle of life and spiritual influence, out of which men

¹ Thus, poor in spirit, *πτωχοὶ τῷ πνύματι*, i.e. *πνυματικῶς*.—Matt. v. 3. Waxed strong in spirit, *ἐκραταιοῦτο πνύματι*, i.e. *πνυματικῶς*.—Luke i. 80. Rejoiced in spirit, *ἠγαλλιάσατο τῷ πνύματι*, i.e. *πνυματικῶς*, etc.—Luke x. 21.

² *Ζωοποιῆσθαι*.

were to “receive, and grace for grace.” As a divine person, all life, all power, necessarily inhered in his nature; but as Mediator, that spiritual life and energy which make him powerful to save, are gifts bestowed on him by the Father, as rewards of his obedience to death, and as the means of gaining the ultimate object of his atoning sufferings. He asked of the Father this life, and he gave it him. It was the consequence of his penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings, on which his intercession is based. It is to this that he refers when he says, “Except a corn of wheat fall to the ground and die,” or rather, fall into the ground, being dead, “it abideth alone; but if it die,” if it be dead, “it bringeth forth much fruit.” Had Christ not died as the victim of sin bodily, he could never have “lived for ever” as an all-successful Intercessor, “able to save us to the uttermost”—for ever.¹ “If I,” said he, “be lifted up,” lifted up on the cross (“for this he said, signifying what death he should die”),—“I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me.”² “The Captain of salvation was perfected by suffering.” “Because he humbled himself, God highly exalted him, and gave him” all “power over all flesh,” all “power in heaven and earth.”

The spiritual life and power conferred on the Saviour as the reward of his disinterested labours in the cause of God’s honour and man’s salvation, were illustriously manifested in that wonderful quickening of his apostles by the communication of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost; and in communicating through the instrumentality of their ministry spiritual life, and all its concomitant and following blessings, to multitudes of souls dead in sins.³

It is to this, I apprehend, that the apostle refers, when

¹ Εἰς τὸ παντελές, Heb. vii. 25.

² John xii. 24, 32.

³ Παρουθείς postquam in cœlum ascendit ut mox, com. 12.—John xiv. 2, 3, 12, 28, xvi. 7, 28. Dicitur Christus predicasse gentibus, quia Apostoli

he says, *by which*, or *whereby*, by this spiritual quickening,—or *wherefore*,¹ being thus spiritually quickened,—“he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who beforetime were disobedient.” If our general scheme of interpretation is well founded, there can be no doubt as to who those “spirits in prison” are. They are not human spirits confined in bodies like so many prisons, as a punishment for sin in some previous state of being,—that is a heathenish doctrine, to which Scripture rightly interpreted gives no sanction,—but sinful men righteously condemned, the slaves and captives of Satan, shackled with the fetters of sin. These are the captives to whom Messiah, “anointed by the Spirit of the Lord,”—that is just, in other words, “quickened in the Spirit,”—was to proclaim liberty, the bound ones to whom he was to announce the opening of the prison. This is no uncommon mode of representing the work of the Messiah. “Thus saith the Lord God, he that created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein: I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and will give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes; to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.”² “He said unto me, Thou art my servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified. Then I said, I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God. And now, saith the Lord that formed

id ejus nomine et virtute fecerunt.—2 Cor. v. 20; Acts xiii. 47; Rom. xv. 16; Gal. ii. 8; Eph. ii. 17.—GROTIUS.

¹ Ἐν ᾧ. Τοῦτο ΕΝ ᾧ ἀντὶ τοῦ ΔΙΟ κεῖται αἰτιολογικῶς.—ŒCUMENIUS.

² Isa. xlii. 5, 7.

me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength. And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and he shall choose thee. Thus saith the Lord, In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee: and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages: that thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves: they shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. Behold, these shall come from far; and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.”¹

It is not unnatural, then, that guilty and depraved men should be represented as captives in prison; but the phrase “spirits in prison” seems a strange one for spiritually captive men. It is so; but the use of it, rather than the word *men* in prison, or prisoners, seems to have grown out of the previous phrase, quickened in spirit.² He who was

¹ Isa. xlix. 3-12.

² “Congruens sermo.”—BENGEL.

quicken in the Spirit had to do with the spirits of men, with men as spiritual beings. This seems to have given a colour to the whole passage: the eight persons saved from the deluge are termed eight *souls*.¹

But then it seems as if the spirits in prison, to whom our Lord, quickened in spirit, is represented as coming and preaching, were the unbelieving generation who lived before the flood,—“the spirits in prison, who aforetime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.” This difficulty is not a formidable one: this stumbling-block may easily be removed. “Spirits in prison” is a phrase characteristic of men in all ages. We see nothing perplexing in the statement, ‘God sent the gospel to the Britons, who in the days of Cæsar were painted savages:’ the persons to whom God sent the gospel were not the same individuals who were painted savages in the days of Cæsar, but they belonged to the same race. Neither should we find anything perplexing in the statement: Jesus Christ came and preached to spiritually captive men, who were hard to be convinced in former times, especially in the days of Noah.² The reason why there is reference to the disobedience of men in former times, and especially in the days of Noah, will probably come out in the course of our future illustrations.

Having endeavoured to dispose of these verbal difficulties, let us now attend to the sentiment contained in the words,

¹ Πνύματα hic in genere denotant homines quemadmodum paullo post ψυχαι ἐν φύλακι. Judæi sub jugo legis—Gentiles sub potestate Diaboli—Illos omnes Christus liberavit, prædicationem verbi sui ad ipsos mittens, et continuans, et Apostolos divina virtute instruens.—SCHÆTGENII *Horæ Heb.* p. 1043.

² Grotius’s note is worth quoting: *Quales animi olim Noë temporibus non obtemperarunt. Loquitur quasi iidem fuissent: et fuerunt iidem, spiritus, sive animi—iidem non ἀριθμῶν, ut Aristoteles loquitur, sed genere.*

‘Jesus Christ, spiritually quickened, came and preached to the spirits in prison, who in time past were disobedient.’ The coming and preaching describe not what our Lord did *bodily*,¹ but what he did *spiritually*;² not what he did personally, but what he did by the instrumentality of others. The Apostle Paul has explained the meaning of the Apostle Peter, when, in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, he represents Christ as, after “having abolished in his flesh the enmity, coming and preaching peace to them who were afar off, and to them who were nigh;” that is, both to Gentiles and to Jews. Another very satisfactory commentary may be found in the Gospels. “All power is given unto me,” said our Saviour after being quickened in the spirit,—“All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. So, then, after the Lord had spoken to them, he was received into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.”³ To the apostle, who was born as one out of due time, the commission was, “I send thee to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ;” and whatever Paul did effectually in the discharge of that commission, it was not *he*, but *Christ* by him.⁴ Thus, then, is Christ, quickened

¹ Σαρνικῶς, or σωματικῶς.

² Πνευματικῶς.

³ Eph. ii. 13-17; Matt. xxviii. 18, 19; Mark xvi. 19, 20.

⁴ Acts xxvi. 16-18; Rom. xv. 18.

in consequence of his suffering, the just One in the room of the unjust, going and preaching to the spirits in prison.

There are two subsidiary ideas in reference to this preaching of Christ quickened in the Spirit, to the spirits in prison, that are suggested by the words of the apostle; and these are—the success of his preaching, and the extent of that success. These spirits in prison had “aforetime been disobedient.” Christ had preached to them not only by Noah, but by all the prophets, for the spirit in the prophets was “the Spirit of Christ;” but he had preached in a great measure in vain. He had to complain in reference to his preaching by his prophets, and in reference to his own personal preaching, previously to his suffering the just in the room of the unjust: “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain. All day long I have stretched out my hands to a stiffnecked and rebellious people.” “Who hath believed our report?” But now, Jesus Christ being quickened by the Spirit, and quickening others by the Spirit, the consequence was, “the disobedient were turned to the wisdom of the just;” and “the spirits in prison” appeared “a people made ready, prepared for the Lord.” The word, attended by the Spirit, in consequence of the shedding of the blood of the covenant, had free course and was glorified, and “the prisoners were sent forth out of the pit wherein there was no water.” “The prey” was “taken from the mighty,” the captive of the terrible one was delivered. The sealed among the tribes of Israel were “a hundred forty and four thousand;” and the converted from among the nations, the people taken out from among the Gentiles, to the name of Jehovah, formed an innumerable company, “a multitude which no man could number, out of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.” It was not then “as in the days of Noah, when few, that is, eight souls, were saved.” Multitudes

heard and knew the joyful sound ; the shackles dropped from their limbs, and they walked at liberty, keeping God's commandments. And still does the fountain of life spring up in the quickened Redeemer's heart, and well forth, giving life to the world. Still does the great Deliverer prosecute his glorious work of spiritual emancipation. Still is he going and preaching to the "spirits in prison;" and though all have not obeyed, yet many already have obeyed, many are obeying, many more will yet obey.

The connection of Christ's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings, with this increased spiritual life and vigour in Him as the Redeemer and Saviour of men, and its blessed consequences in the extensive and effectual administration of the word of his grace, is stated here, but not here only. It is often, as I have already had occasion to remark, brought forward in Scripture : "Christ has redeemed men from the curse of the law, having become a curse in their room, that the blessing of Abraham," a free and full justification, "might come upon the Gentiles, and that men might receive the promised Spirit through believing." "It is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come ; but if I depart, I will send him to you." The Spirit is given because Jesus is glorified ; and Jesus is glorified, for he has "finished the work which the Father had given him to do," in laying down his "life for his sheep," and in giving his "flesh for the life of the world."

This connection between the atoning death of Christ, and his being quickened, and the quickening of men by him, may be easily understood. The truth respecting it may be stated in a sentence or two. The power of dispensing divine influence formed an important part of our Lord's mediatorial reward, and it was impossible to conceive of any reward more suitable to his holy, benevolent character ; and there was an obvious propriety that the

work should be accomplished before the reward was conferred. Besides, the truth respecting Christ suffering and dying, the just in the room of the unjust, is the grand instrument which the Holy Spirit employs for converting men, for quickening dead souls. This is the great subject of efficient preaching. Till the atonement was made, the revelation of it could be but obscure. It was meet that the great Preacher should have a clear, full message to proclaim, before he came and preached to every nation under heaven; and that the great spiritual agent should be furnished with the fittest instrumentality for performing all the moral miracles of the new creation. Such appears to me the probable meaning of this much disputed passage.

This view of the subject has this additional advantage, that it preserves the connection of the passage, both grammatical and logical. The words of the apostle, thus explained, plainly bear on his great practical object: 'Be not afraid, be not ashamed of suffering in a good cause, in a right spirit. No damage comes from well-doing, or from suffering in well-doing. Christ, in suffering the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, suffered for well-doing; and though his sufferings ended in his dying bodily, they ended also in his being spiritually quickened, and, through the effectual manifestation of the truth, becoming the "author of eternal salvation to all who obey him." Nor is this all. Even his mortal body has, in consequence of these sufferings, been raised from the grave, and in that body he is "gone into heaven, and has sat down on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him."'

I am further confirmed in this view of the passage, by observing that in one very important part of it I have the support of Archbishop Leighton. In the text of his commentary, he interprets the passage according to the usual

Protestant mode of exposition; but in a note he observes: "Thus I then thought, but do now apprehend another sense as more probable. The mission of the Spirit, and the preaching of the gospel by it, after his resurrection: preaching to sinners, and converting them according to the prophecy which he first fulfilled in person, and after more amply in his apostles; that prophecy, I mean, Isa. lxi.: The Spirit was upon him, and was sent from him to his apostles, to preach to spirits in prison, to preach liberty to the captives, captive spirits, and therefore called *spirits* in prison, to illustrate the thing the more by opposition to that Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of liberty, setting them free; and this to show the greater efficacy of Christ's preaching than of Noah's: though he was a signal preacher of righteousness, yet only himself and his family, eight persons, were saved by him, but multitudes of all nations by the Spirit and preaching of Christ in the gospel."

What a striking light does this representation cast on the deplorable condition of fallen men! "Spirits in prison;" "dead souls." There is something monstrous here. Nothing naturally so free as spirit; nothing so full of life as *souls*. How deplorable to see bondage and death, where there originally was nothing but liberty and life! We may be disgusted, but we are not surprised, at seeing a loathsome reptile crawling on the earth. But we are at once amazed and shocked, when we see the bird of the sun, with blinded eyes, and broken pinions, and soiled feathers, moving with awkward difficulty along the ground, instead of "sailing with supreme dominion through the azure deep of air,"¹ "unscaling his sight at the fountain of radiance."² Alas, what a captivity! Condemned—waiting the hour of the execution of the sentence—no possibility of effecting their escape! Nor man nor angel can open the door of their

¹ Gray.² Milton.

prison-house. Yet are they, blessed be God, prisoners of hope. There is a Saviour, and a great one: Jesus, who "saves his people from their sins," and who, in doing so, "delivers them from the wrath to come."

How well fitted is He for performing all the functions of a deliverer! This is a second reflection suggested by our subject. He has become "perfect through sufferings." He has all the merit, all the power, both as to external event and internal influence, all the authority, all the sympathy that is necessary to enable him effectually to liberate the prisoners of divine justice, the captives of infernal power. He has suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, so as to become dead, as the victim of human transgression; and the atonement made by these sufferings is an atonement of infinite value. And he has been spiritually quickened: endowed with such a superabundance of life as to enable him to give eternal life to innumerable dead souls; and endowed with an infinity of energy, so that he can vanquish the enslavers, level the prison walls, loose the fetters of innumerable "spirits in prison."

Prisoners of hope, turn the eye of faith and desire towards your all-accomplished Deliverer. Remember, now is the accepted time. Yet a little longer, and you will be prisoners more than ever, but no longer prisoners of hope. To borrow the earnest expostulations of a pious divine, "Oh, do not destroy yourselves! You are in prison; he proclaims your liberty. Christ proclaims you liberty; and will you not accept it? Think, though you may be pleased with your present thralldom and prison, it reserves you (if you come not forth) to another prison, which will not please you. These chains of spiritual darkness in which you now are, unless ye be by him freed, will be exchanged, not for freedom, but for the chains of everlasting darkness, wherein the hopeless prisoners are kept to the judgment of the great

day.”¹ Accept his offer of deliverance, life, liberty. The eternal life which was with the Father gives you life: receive it, and you have life; you have it abundantly. Blessedness is yours, yours for ever. “The Son makes you free, and ye are free indeed.”

In what a dignified light does this passage represent the ministry of divine truth! It is the work of the perfected Saviour. Having suffered to the death for sins, in the room of the unjust, and having been spiritually quickened, he comes and preaches to the spirits in prison. He preaches “peace to you who were afar off, and to them who were nigh.” The voice is on earth, the speaker is in heaven. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, being made so much better than the angels, as he hath received by inheritance a more excellent name than they.” He that neglecteth and despiseth the word of reconciliation, despiseth not man, but God—“God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself:” wonderful, most wonderful! beseeching men to be reconciled to Him. Surely we should see that we “refuse not Him that speaketh thus to us from heaven.” Surely we should “give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard,” which we now hear from him, “lest at any time we should let them slip: for if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the

¹ Leighton.

Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them who heard him ; God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will ?”

The exalted Redeemer is the great, the only effectual preacher. His ministers preach with effect only when he speaks and works *in* them and *by* them. It is an advice full of wisdom as well as of piety, which the good Archbishop gives to those who are anxious to derive saving advantage from the ministry of the word : “Ye that are for your own interest, be earnest with this Lord of life, this fountain of spirit, to let forth more of it upon his messengers in these times. You would receive back the fruit of your prayer. Were ye living this way, you would find more life and refreshing sweetness in the word of life, how weak and worthless soever they were that brought it. It would descend as sweet showers upon the valleys, and make them fruitful.”

“Brethren, for your own sakes as well as ours, pray for us, that the word of the LORD may have free course and be glorified.” *His* word is quick and powerful. It is “spirit and life ;” it “converts the soul ; it makes wise the simple ; it rejoices the heart ; it enlightens the eyes ; it endureth for ever.” It is as powerful now as in the primitive age. It still “brings down high imaginations ;” and while it emancipates the imprisoned spirit from the thralldom of depraved principle, satanic power, and human authority, “it brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” Oh that through *his* preaching many may be thus at once emancipated and made captive, freed from the fetters of earthliness and sin, bound in the chains of holy principle and divine love ; may at once cease to be “spirits in prison,” and become inhabitants of that “high tower, that impregnable fortress,” in which all obedient to his call are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation !”

The subject we have been considering in this section of the discourse brings also before the mind, in a very striking form, some of the great motives and encouragements to missionary exertion. The state of the unenlightened part of mankind, as spirits in prison, calls for our sympathy; and since their imprisonment is not hopeless, it calls for our exertions to procure their emancipation. Had there been no atoning sacrifice, no quickening Spirit, it would have been godlike to mourn their servitude and condemnation, but it would have been madness to have attempted their deliverance.

But there has been an all-perfect, an infinitely valuable atoning sacrifice offered up. Christ, the just One, has died in the room of the unjust, for the express purpose that enslaved, condemned man may be brought to forgiveness and liberty, by being brought to God. No legal bar lies in the way of the emancipation of the spirits in prison, for the offered sacrifice has been accepted. The righteous Judge is well pleased with it, and is ready to demonstrate that he is just in justifying the ungodly who believe in Jesus. He has shown this, by bringing from the dust of death, and seating on his right hand, Him who gave himself a ransom for many. And as there is a law-satisfying atonement, so there is a powerful quickening Spirit, who gives life and liberty. He who was put to death in the flesh is spiritually quickened by that Spirit. And having that Spirit given him without measure, he, in the word of the truth of the gospel, not only proclaims liberty to the captive, but, going forth by the Spirit, he actually unlooses their fetters, and gives them at once that power and the disposition to walk at liberty, keeping the commandments of God. Yes, He who died, the just in the room of the unjust,—He who, to make atonement for sin, was “crucified in weakness,” and “became dead in the flesh,” having been “quicken in the Spirit,” lives by the power of God, and has come preaching

to the spirits in prison, making the perverse willing in the day of his power, and "turning the disobedient to the wisdom of the just."

The great work of the emancipation of the spirits in prison is not, then, a hopeless one. Many have been delivered, multitudes more will be delivered. Jesus Christ has not died in vain. The life which the Father has given him to have in himself shall not remain dormant and inoperative. It was so ordained that he might be a fountain of life to spiritually dead man, and might quicken whom he would. This great work of the emancipation of spirits in prison is, strictly speaking, the work of the *Divine Deliverer*. He only could make atonement; He only can give the Spirit.

But he has most kindly and wisely so arranged the method of emancipation, that a place is afforded for the active willing services of those whom he has delivered, in accomplishing the actual enfranchisement of their brethren who still remain "spirits in prison." The gospel which announces the atonement, and in connection with which the Spirit is given, is to be diffused, not by miraculous means, not by angelic agency, but by the voluntary exertions of spiritually emancipated men. It is by their exertions, as the helpers of the Lord, that the chariot in which the Redeemer "rides forth prosperously, because of truth and meekness and righteousness," taking captive captivity, wresting his slave from the mighty, his prey from the terrible one, moves on. They are that angel by which the "everlasting gospel is to be preached to them who dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." It is in the gospel thus propagated that we are to look for him who is quickened in the Spirit to preach effectually to the spirits in prison. Let, then, the considerations, that mankind, the great body of our race, are in a state of condemnation and spiritual slavery; that an all-perfect atoning

sacrifice has been offered up, suited to them all, sufficient for them all, offered to them all; that by that sacrifice an honourable channel has been opened for the life-giving, liberty-giving Spirit; that a plain, well-accredited record has been given into our hands, a record fitted and intended to be the Spirit's instrument of putting the individual sinner in possession of the saving results of the atonement, and of filling his heart with the energies and joys of spiritual life and liberty, and that this record is put into *our* hands for the purpose of being universally made known, that wherever there are spirits in prison, liberty may be proclaimed to them;—let these considerations make their due impression on us; and then, instead of becoming weary in well-doing, allowing our zeal to abate or our exertions to diminish, we shall be “stedfast and immoveable, always abounding in this work of the Lord,” counting it a high honour that we are permitted to take a part, however humble, in carrying forward towards complete accomplishment the mighty enterprise in which God makes known the depth of his wisdom, the greatness of his power, and the riches of his grace, and for which his incarnate Son died on earth and reigns in heaven.

§ 2. *He rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him.*

The second statement in reference to the consequences of our Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings, comes now to be considered. “Having been raised from the dead, he went into heaven,¹ where he is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him.” Our Lord's resurrection; his ascension or entrance

¹ Without any authority from existing Greek mss., the Vulgate adds here, “Deglutiens mortem, ut vitæ æternæ heredes efficeremur.” It is difficult to account for such an interpolation. It seems to be a *scholion*

into heaven ; his session at the right hand of God ; and the subjection of angels, and authorities, and powers, to him ; all viewed as the consequences of his penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings : these are the interesting topics to which your attention is now to be directed.

(1.) *His resurrection.*

I remark, then, that as the result of his penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings, our Lord was raised from the dead. He not only, by laying down, as the victim of human guilt, his natural life as a man, obtained for himself that spiritual life and vigour, in the exercise of which he subdued multitudes of the hardened race which had stood out against former attempts to reclaim them ; but he also, after a short season, resumed the life which he had laid down. The body of Jesus, after he had on the cross given up the ghost, was taken down and laid in a sepulchre, and his parted spirit went to paradise.¹ The two constituent parts of his human nature were completely separated, disjoined from each other, though neither of them was disunited from his divinity, and remained in a state of separation for a season, from the evening of the sixth to the morning of the first day of the week ; a season sufficiently long, in connection with the circumstances of his crucifixion, to prove that his death was not seeming, but real.

Our Lord had repeatedly assured his disciples that he would rise again, rise again on the third day ; though it seems plain they attached very indistinct ideas to these words till events made them plain. Rumours respecting these statements had got abroad, and the Jewish authorities

brought into the text ; but it must have been so at a very early period, as, with the exception of *two*, or perhaps *three*, it appears in all the MSS. of the Vulgate.

¹ Luke xxiii. 43.

thinking, or pretending to think, that his disciples would attempt to steal his body, and turn his empty grave in connection with these statements to account, in support of their Master's claim to Messiahship, took every precaution to secure the sepulchre from violation till after the specified period had elapsed. But how vain these counsels, how fruitless these attempts to defeat the purposes of God, to falsify the declarations of his Son! He that sat in the heavens laughed at them. Jehovah held them and their endeavours in derision. These endeavours to render impossible the proof of Jesus' Messiahship, ended in furnishing the most convincing demonstration of that great fact, on which, above all others, the evidence of that truth rests.

"In the end of the Sabbath," we are informed by the sacred historian, "as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the keepers did shake, became as dead men," and precipitately retreated from a scene so full of terror.¹ It was amid these awful appearances of nature, meet accompaniments of a transaction so inappreciably important, that the Son of God exercised his power, in taking up again that life which no man could have taken from him, but which he had laid down of himself; and that the Father, "according to the working of his mighty power," fulfilled his ancient promise, that the soul of his Holy One should not be left in the separate state, and that his body should not see corruption.²

The resurrection of our Lord in the body in which he lived and died, as it is the fact on which, above all others, rests his claims and our hopes, is established by the most in-

¹ Matt. xxviii. 1-4.

² John x. 17, 18; Eph. i. 19; Ps. xvi. 10.

fallible proofs, the most abundant evidence. The sepulchre was found empty on the morning of the third day. That is an indubitable fact; and the only satisfactory, the only plausible account that ever has been given of that fact, is the resurrection. The only other account of it which the ingenuity of ancient and modern infidels has been able to devise, is the self-contradictory story—a story which bears collusion on the face of it—which was put into the mouths of the Roman soldiers, “that the disciples came by night and stole him away while they slept.”¹

The resurrection makes all things plain. It suits with all that went before and all that followed. On the supposition that it did not take place, the history of the life and death of Jesus, and the history of his religion, are alike riddles and mysteries, involved in inextricable difficulties. No human ingenuity can in this case reconcile the authenticated facts with the ordinary principles of human nature, and the established laws of the moral world.

Nobody can doubt that the resurrection of Christ was taught by his original followers: “Jesus and the resurrection” were their great themes. This, supposing that he had not risen from the dead, could only originate either in fraud or in enthusiasm. If fraud had existed, it must have been detected. There was no want of power, or disposition, or opportunity, to detect it. Besides, the character of the apostles; their previous views and conduct; their personal toils, hazards, and sufferings, in a cause which, if not the cause of truth, could do nothing for them, but, on the contrary, entail ruin on them in both worlds; their making the propagation of this fact, and of others connected with it, their great business through life, and then cheerfully sealing their testimony by their blood;—all these make it as certain as anything of the kind can be, that there was no

¹ Matt. xxviii. 13.

imposture in the case. And if they did not deceive, it is just as plain they were not, they could not be, deceived. They were intimately acquainted with Jesus previously to his death; they often saw him during the six weeks he continued on earth after his resurrection. "It was not one person, but many, that saw him: they saw him not only separately, but together; not only at night, but by day; not at a distance, but near; not once, but several times. They not only saw him, but touched him, conversed with him, ate with him, and examined his person to satisfy their doubts."¹ Well might the evangelical historian say, that "to the apostles whom he had chosen, he showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs."²

The proofs of the resurrection of Christ should be most familiar to our minds; for it is the very corner-stone of Christian evidence. "If Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, our faith is vain;" the apostolic testimony is falsehood; "we are yet in our sins," and all our hopes of pardon and eternal life are delusive dreams. And viewed in connection with the doctrine that "Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures," the statement that he "rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures," forms an essential part of that gospel which has been preached to us by the apostles, which we also have received, and wherein we stand, by which we shall be saved, if we keep in memory what has been preached to us; for "this is the word of faith which we preach," says the apostle, "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."³

The resurrection of our Lord owes its peculiar importance to the fact of its being the result of his penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings. It is the evidence that the

¹ Paley.² Acts i. 3.³ 1 Cor. xv. 1-4, 14-17; Rom. x. 8-10.

Supreme Judge is satisfied with these sufferings as an adequate compensation for the injuries done to his law and government by the sins of men. "It is finished," said the Saviour from the cross; and from out the empty sepulchre comes, to the ear of enlightened faith, the echo of these words, "It is finished:" for God, as "the God of peace," the reconciled Divinity,—he who was angry at the sins of men, but whose anger is turned away,—"has brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant."¹ Because that blood, by which the everlasting covenant was to be ratified, has been shed, therefore "hath God raised him up from the dead, and given him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God,"² as well pleased *with* him, well pleased with us *in* him. Having fully answered all the demands of that law under which he was made, "for the unjust," having fulfilled all righteousness, having become a curse for them, having become "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," it was not possible that he should continue bound by the bands of death. The only reason which ever existed for his dying—to wit, that human guilt might be expiated—existed no longer. Human guilt is expiated; the great atonement has been made; and it is meet that he who was "given," devoted to death as a victim, "for our offences," on account of our sins, should be "raised again for our justification;"³ that is, I apprehend, on account of that which avails to our justification; his finished work, called our justification, as it is that which justifies us.⁴

¹ Heb. xiii. 20.² 1 Pet. i. 21.³ Rom. iv. 25.

⁴ "*Our* offences"—the ground of our condemnation—were the procuring cause of his death; "*our* justification," that which justifies us—his obedience unto death—is the procuring cause of his resurrection. This interpretation secures to *διὰ* with the accusative the same sense in both clauses, and that sense its proper sense.

(2.) *His ascension to heaven.*

I now proceed to remark, in the next place, that as the result of his penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings, our Lord ascended to heaven. "He is gone into heaven," says the apostle. When our Lord was raised from the dead, it was not that he might continue to be an inhabitant of this lower world. It was that, in the nature in which he had obtained eternal redemption for all who obey him, he might, on the throne of the universe, preside over the whole train of events by which this everlasting deliverance, in all the variety of its blessings, should be bestowed on those for whom it was procured. He remained on earth long enough to give satisfactory evidence of the reality of his resurrection, and "to give commandments to the apostles whom he had chosen" to wait for the communication of the promised Spirit, and then in his name to "go into all the world," and proclaim to mankind his doctrine and law.

When the forty days appointed for these purposes had elapsed, and the time of his being taken up had come, "He led his disciples out from Jerusalem as far as Bethany, and lifted up his hands, and blessed them; and it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." They eagerly gazed after him as he majestically rose, with extended blessing hands, till a cloud received him out of their sight; and "while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up to heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."¹

Such is the sublimely simple account of our Lord's going

¹ Luke xxiv. 50, 51; Acts i. 9-11.

into heaven ; but from the intimations of ancient prediction in reference to this event, we cannot doubt that it was accompanied with circumstances of grandeur, too glorious to be made the subject of contemplation to men dwelling in flesh. Beholding it in prophetic vision, at the distance of many centuries, we find the inspired bard exclaiming, "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive."¹ "It would seem," as has been remarked,² "that the two radiant messengers who appeared to the disciples as they were gazing after their Master with ardent eyes, formed only a small part of his celestial retinue. It would seem that in his train there were thousands and myriads of the chariots or cavalry of God: that legions of the heavenly hierarchies, and a countless multitude of the noblest of created beings, tuned their harps or sounded their trumpets in his praise." It is not an improbable conjecture, though it is nothing more, that "the many saints" who came out of their graves after his resurrection joined him as he ascended, and went with him into heaven, as a proof that he had vanquished sin and death, and become the "first-fruits of them that sleep."

We cannot help attempting to follow him in thought. As he draws near to the heavenly Zion, "the perfection of beauty," "the city of the great King," the habitation of the heavenly Majesty, the tabernacle which God, not man, has pitched; the whole celestial city is moved at his coming, the everlasting gates are flung open for his reception, and "with gladness and rejoicing he is brought, and enters into the King's palace." "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises."

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 17, 18.

² Balmer.

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory.”¹

Where that heaven is which has received our Lord, and which must retain him during “the times of restitution of all things,”² where “he must reign till all his enemies become his footstool,”³ we need not inquire, for it is impossible for us to know; but we are warranted in asserting, that it is a place where all the perfections of the Deity, which can be manifested by means of material grandeur and beauty, are displayed in a degree of which we can form no adequate conception; and that whatever can render a place desirable as a residence to a perfectly holy embodied human mind, with its intellectual faculties and moral dispositions and sensibilities in the highest state of perfection, is to be found there in absolute completeness. The best notion we can form of it is the general one, that it is the place which the eternal Father, the God of infinite power, and wisdom, and righteousness, and love, has prepared as a meet residence for his incarnate Only-Begotten, in whom he is well pleased, after he had on earth finished the work which he had given him to do.

The body in which our Lord rose and ascended was the body in which he had lived and died. It was flesh and blood, as he himself very explicitly states. But “flesh and

¹ Ps. xlvii. 5, 6, xxiv. 7-10.

² Acts iii. 21: “*Ἀχρι χρόνων ἀποκαταστάσις πάντων*.” Luke iv. 13; Acts xiii. 11; Rom. v. 13; Gal. iv. 2. In all these passages, *ἄχρι* seems to signify “during,” not “until.”

³ 1 Cor. xv. 25.

blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." A change seems to have taken place on it on the occasion, similar to that which "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," is to pass on the saints who are found alive on the earth at the coming of our Lord, and which also shall take place on them when they are "caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."¹

This ascension to heaven, like the resurrection which preceded it, is a result of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of our Lord. "He that ascended is the same as he that descended;" and it is because he descended to the lowest depths of suffering as our appointed victim, that he ascends to the sublimest heights of celestial honour and felicity as our perfected Redeemer. The entrance within the veil into the holy of holies was closely connected with the offering of the sacrifice for the atonement of the sins of the whole congregation of Israel. The high priest entered there, to present the blood of the sacrifice before God. He could not enter there without having made ceremonial expiation for them by that blood; and it was in consequence of our great High Priest having, by his own sacrifice, "for ever perfected them that are sanctified,"² that he passed through these visible heavens, the antitype of the veil under the Mosaic economy, to appear in the true Holy of Holies, in the presence of the divine Majesty, with the tokens of his completed sacrifice, and to plead for the communication of those blessings for which he had paid the price, even his own blood.

(3.) *He is "on the right hand of God."*

Another result of our Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings is, His being on the right hand of God, in that heaven into which he entered. The phrase in its complete

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 50, 52; 1 Thess. iv. 17.

² Heb. ix. 12, x. 14.

form is, "He sitteth on the right hand of God." This phrase, which occurs frequently in the New Testament, is plainly borrowed from Ps. cx., where Jehovah is represented as saying to Messiah the Prince, David's Lord, "Sit on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool."¹ The language is plainly figurative. Neither "the right hand of God," nor "sitting" at his right hand, can be literally understood. The figure is, a person sitting on the throne, on the right hand of the sovereign.

Some have strangely held that this is intended to betoken the inferiority of Christ to the Father. It has been said, a person, whom it was intended very highly to honour, was placed on the left hand of the person intending to honour him. But whatever might be the practice among other nations, the right hand was among the Jews undoubtedly the place of honour, and by their customs must their writings be expounded. Others still more strangely have held, that it indicates that, in a certain sense, Christ is superior to the Father. This assertion is absurd and blasphemous. For what saith the Scripture? "The Father hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted who did put all things under him."

The leading idea is common possession, with his Father, of the power and authority and glory of supreme Governor. Paul expounds it to us. Having quoted the text in Ps. cx., "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," he draws the conclusion, "He must reign till all his enemies are put under his feet."² To use the language of Daniel, "One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before Him. And there was given to him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that

¹ Ps. cx. 1.

² 1 Cor. x. 25.

all people, nations, and languages should serve him : his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." "The Father judgeth no man ; he hath given all judgment to the Son." "He hath put all things under his feet," in giving him a seat at his right hand, on his throne.¹

While this is undoubtedly the primary idea, there are other and not unimportant secondary ones indicated by this phrase. There are the glory and dignity connected with such power and authority. Sitting on the right hand of God, amid the splendours of the burning throne, he is "crowned with glory and honour." All human, all created glory, when compared with this, grows dim and disappears. And there is also the idea of supreme blessedness : "At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore;" "The King," sitting on Jehovah's right hand, "joys in his strength, and greatly rejoices in his salvation. He hath given him his heart's desire, and hath not withholden the request of his lips. He hath prevented him with the blessings of his goodness, and set a crown of pure gold on his head. His glory is great in his salvation ; honour and majesty has he laid on him. For he has made him most blessed for ever ; he has made him exceeding glad with his countenance."²

There seems, too, in the words, an intended tacit contrast to the posture of the priests even when in the Holy of Holies. They "*stood* ministering" at a humble distance before the emblematical throne of God, the mercy-seat. He "sits down on the throne, on the right hand" of him that sits thereon.³

This, like the other things mentioned in the text, is the result of our Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings.

¹ Dan. vii. 13, 14 ; John v. 22 ; Ps. viii. 6 : comp. 1 Cor. xv. 27, and Heb. ii. 8, 9.

² Ps. xvi. 11, xxi. 1-6.

³ Heb. x. 11, 12.

These dignities are the purchase of his sufferings, the reward of his toils. It was "for the suffering of death that he was crowned with glory and honour." It was by giving himself a sacrifice that he overcame the enemies of man's salvation; and it was because "he overcame, that he sat down on his Father's throne." And in the Apocalypse, when represented in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, he is said to be "a Lamb as it had been slain;" and the song of worship by the redeemed to him is, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, and hath redeemed us to God by his own blood."¹

(4.) *Angels, authorities, and powers, are made subject to Him.*

I have only further to remark, that "the having angels, authorities, and powers, made subject to Him," is the result of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of our Lord. These words are not perhaps so much the expression of a new thought, as the expansion of the primary idea contained in "is at the right hand of God," which is, as we have seen, supreme dominion. The three words, "angels, authorities, and powers," may either be considered as all descriptive of angelic beings, and as equivalent to all orders of angels—angels both authorities and powers, the same orders that are elsewhere styled "principalities and powers;" or authorities and powers may be viewed as intended to denote the various forms of human authority and power. We are rather disposed to take the first view of the words,—a view which by implication contains the second; for certainly if the highest orders of creatures are made subject to him, all inferior orders must be subjected to him also.

The exalted Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, is the Lord of angels. The command given to them "when the Father

¹ Heb. ii. 9; Rev. iii. 21, v. 6, 12.

is bringing in the first-begotten into the world"—that is, putting him in possession of his inheritance as "heir of all things"—is, "Let all the angels of God worship him,"¹—a command which we find from the Apocalypse they joyfully obey. He is their King, and they acknowledge him to be so, and do incessantly admire and adore him. They rejoice in his glory, and in the glory and happiness of men through him. They yield him most cheerful obedience, and serve him readily, in the good of his Church and every individual believer, as he deposes and employs them. There are two things intended in these words: Christ's dignity above the angels, and Christ's authority over the angels.² He has an essential dignity above the angels. "He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." 'Created spirits' is their name; the 'only-begotten Son' is his. To which of the angels did he ever say, "Thou art my Son, this day I have begotten thee?" He has also a mediatorial dignity above them. As God-man, he has been "made much better than the angels." "He is Lord of all;" they are servants. Human nature in him is exalted above all angelic nature. "That nature which he stooped below them to take on, 'being made lower than the angels,' he has carried up and raised above them. The very earth, the flesh of man, is exalted in his person above all those heavenly spirits who are of so excellent and pure a being in their nature, and have been from the beginning of the world clothed with so transcendent glory. A parcel of clay is made so bright and set so high as to outshine those bright flaming spirits, those 'sons of the morning,' by being united to the Fountain of Light, the blessed Deity in the person of the Son. In coming to fetch and put on this

• ¹ Heb. i. 6; comp. Ps. xcvi. 9. For illustration of the phrase *εἰσαγαγὲν εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην*, see Ex. vi. 8, xv. 17, xxiii. 23.

² Leighton.

garment, he made himself lower than the angels ; but carrying it with him at his return to his eternal throne, and sitting down with it there, it is high above them. This they look upon with perpetual wonder, but not with envy or repining. No ! Among all these eyes, no such evil eye is to be found. Yea, they rejoice in the infinite wisdom of God in this design, and his infinite love to poor lost mankind. It is wonderful to see him filling the room of their fallen brethren with new guests from earth, yea, such as were born heirs of hell ; thrice wonderful to see not only sinful men thus raised to a participance of glory with them who are spotless, sinless spirits, but their flesh in their Redeemer, dignified with a glory so far beyond them. This is that mystery which they are intent in looking and prying into, and cannot, nor ever shall, see the bottom of it, for it hath none. The words intimate not only Christ's dignity above, but his authority over, his angels. They are not only servants, but his servants. He is their Lord, and they worship him. They are under his command for all services in which it pleases him to employ them ; and the great employment he assigns them is the attending on his Church, and his particular elect ones. ' Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation ? ' " ¹ He who commands angels must control devils. He who is the Lord of angels must be the Lord of all inferior orders of beings, " King of kings and Lord of Lords," " having all power over all flesh," " all power in heaven and in earth."

That this possession of unlimited power and authority, like the resurrection and ascension, is the result of the penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings of our Lord, is very explicitly stated in Scripture. I shall content myself with quoting two passages. The first is that very remarkable

¹ Leighton. Heb. i. 14.

statement in the Epistle to the Philippians (ii. 5–11) : “Christ Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name : that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” The other passage I referred to is in the book of Revelation (v. 8–10). It is the song of the redeemed in heaven. Falling down before the Lamb, they exclaim, “Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof,” that is, to unfold by accomplishment the decrees of the Eternal, “to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing ; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ; and hast made us to our God kings and priests ; and we shall reign on the earth.” Thus have I completed my illustrations of the five great topics suggested in this very fruitful passage of Scripture—The illustrious sufferer Jesus Christ, the just One ; His sufferings ; and the nature, the design, and the results of these sufferings.

VI. THE TENDENCY OF THESE TRUTHS RESPECTING THE
SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST TO SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE
CHRISTIANS SUFFERING FOR HIS CAUSE.

It only remains that I in a very few words endeavour to show how these topics, as treated by the apostle, are fitted to serve the purpose for which they are brought forward here ; that is, to reconcile Christians to sufferings in

the cause of Christ, and to give them support and direction under such sufferings.

The subject is a wide and interesting one, but I must confine myself to a hurried sketch of leading thoughts, which you will do well to follow out in your private meditations. My object as a Christian teacher now and at all times should be, not to save my hearers the trouble of thinking, but if possible to compel them to think, and to furnish them with some helps for thinking rightly and usefully.

When involved in suffering, support and direction are obtained by turning the mind to the contemplation of the great and good who have been placed in similar circumstances. It is on this principle that the apostle puts those to whom he wrote in mind, that "the same afflictions to which they were exposed had been accomplished in their brethren who had been in the world;" and that his beloved brother Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, turns the attention of those to whom *he* wrote to "the great cloud of witnesses"—to the power of faith in the hour of trial—with which they were surrounded. There is no example, however, so fraught with instruction and comfort as that of "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith;" and the points in which that example is instructive and consolatory are finely brought out in the passage before us.¹

"Even Christ, the just One, suffered." If Christ suffered, should Christians think it unreasonable that they should be called to suffer? "Is it not enough that the disciple be as his teacher, the servant as his Lord?"²

And they need not count it strange, though they be harmless and blameless, that they yet suffer. "The just One suffered"—suffered not only though he was just, but because he was just. If they are like Him, they may

¹ 1 Pet. v. 9; Heb. xii. 1, 2.

² Matt. x. 24, 25.

expect to be treated as he was treated, to "be in the world as he was in the world." If it were otherwise, they would have reason to doubt their discipleship. If the world loved them, it would be strong presumption at least that they were the world's *own*. The hatred of the world and its consequences are among the proofs that Christ has "chosen us out of the world."¹

To suffer for Christ, to suffer like Christ, is an honourable thing. It is to have fellowship with Christ, the Lord of glory, in that in which his glory was very remarkably displayed.

Christ, the just One, suffered for sins, for sinners,—for our sins, for us sinners. If he suffered to obtain our salvation, should we grudge to suffer to uphold and extend his glory and cause?

If we are *in* him, his sufferings are ours as to their effects: they have expiated our guilt, so that all our sufferings are not penal, but disciplinary—are fatherly chastisements, not wrathful inflictions. Christ has made all sufferings safe and pleasant to his disciples by this one thing, that he suffered once for sins. He has stripped the cross of its worst terrors; he has taken the curse out of it, and made it light to carry and easy to endure. He has taken the poison out of the cup of affliction; and we can take the cup, however bitter, and bless the name of the Lord. He enables us to say, 'Since he has expiated my sin, since he has secured my salvation, deal with me as thou wilt; afflict me how, when, as heavily as it shall please thee; all is well.'

As to sufferings *for* Christ, they are a privilege and honour. "It is given us on Christ's behalf to suffer for his sake."²

He suffered "that he might bring us to God." Surely

¹ John xv. 18, 19.

² Phil. i. 29.

that is a blessing so great, that, in token of gratitude for it, we should cheerfully do whatever he commands, cheerfully submit to whatever he appoints.

And these our sufferings are, under the influence of his Spirit, one of the means, one of the most powerful of the means, which he is employing, that in our case the design of his death may be realized; that we may be brought to God, made to know him, to enjoy the sweets of his favour and fellowship, "made partakers of his holiness."¹

His sufferings were severe sufferings—sufferings even to death. Let us not, then, think even "fiery trials" strange. What are the severest of our sufferings when compared with his? Let us not wonder, if we be conformed to our Lord, in continuing to suffer in some form or other while we continue to live.

If we are his, death, as in his case, will put an end to all our sufferings. When he became dead bodily, he was quickened spiritually; and is it not so with his people? Is it not "when they are weak that they are strong?" Out of weakness do they not often wax strong? and "when the outward man perisheth, is not the inward man strengthened day by day?"

As to individual Christian experience, personal suffering is very generally connected with the acquisition of spiritual strength. And in reference to power to do good, to promote the cause of Christ, have not the sufferings of Christians been fully as efficient as their exertions? "The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the Church;" and Christianity as well as Christ may say to her enemies, "Rejoice not against me; when I fall, I shall arise."²

Christ's sufferings ended in his resurrection, his ascension, and his celestial dignity, power, and glory. And so will ours, if we be his, and follow in the steps of the ex-

¹ Heb. xii. 10.

² 2 Cor. iv. 16; Mic. vii. 8.

ample he has left us in suffering for us. "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." It is the purpose of the Father to conform all his children to the image of "the First-born among many brethren;" first as suffering, then as glorified. "If we suffer with him, it is that we also may be glorified with him." "To him that overcometh he will give to sit with him on his throne, even as he overcame, and has sat down on his Father's throne."

And are these sufferings of the present time, however severe and protracted, "worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" when we shall enter into his joy, see and share his glory, and have even these "vile bodies fashioned like unto his glorious body?" Are they not "light," however heavy? Are they not "but for a moment," however long continued, when looked at in contrast with the "exceeding great and eternal weight of glory" implied in being "with Christ," being "like Christ," in holiness, in felicity, and in glory, for ever and ever?¹ Surely, surely it is better, since such is the will of God, that we should suffer for Christ, like Christ, than that we should not suffer. Paradoxical as they may appear to a worldly mind, strangely as they may sound to a worldly ear, the apostle's judgment was wise, and his exhortation reasonable: "We count them happy who endure, suffering wrongfully." "Count it all joy when ye are brought into divers trials. Yes, blessed is the man that endureth such trials."² Here, as in everything else, "good is the will of the Lord"—Christ. So rich in instruction and comfort is the example of Christ to the suffering Christian.

"The example and company of the saints in suffering is very considerable, both for guidance and consolation; but

¹ 2 Tim. ii. 12; Rom. viii. 17, 29; Rev. iii. 21; Rom. viii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 17.

² James v. 11, i. 2, 12.

that of Christ is more than any other, yea, than all the rest put together. Therefore, the apostle having, in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, represented the former at large, ends on this as the top of them all: 'Looking to Jesus.' There is a race set before us: it is to be a race with patience," or rather perseverance, "and without fainting. Now he tells us of a cloud of witnesses, a cloud made up of the instances of believers who have suffered before us; and the heat of the day wherein we run is somewhat cooled even by that cloud compassing us; but the main strength of the comfort here lies in beholding Christ, eyeing his sufferings, and their issue. The considering and contemplating of Him will be the strongest cordial, will keep you from wearying and fainting by the way."¹

It is only Christians, in the true sense of that word, that can derive from the sufferings of Christ the advantages which we have now been illustrating. Men, while they continue in their sins, can have neither part nor lot in this matter. They must suffer, for they are men; and "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;" "Man born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble;" but under their afflictions they have none of the supports and consolations which the children of God, the disciples of Christ, derive from the consideration, that "even Christ also suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring them to God." Their afflictions are indeed intended to rouse them to serious thought, to tell them they are sinners, to show them what an evil and a bitter thing sin is, and to make them feel how much they need a Saviour; but if these afflictions are not improved for this purpose, they will turn out to have been but the first prelusive drops of the overwhelming storm of divine vengeance.

¹ Leighton.

But why should men continue in sin, in guilt, in depravity ; why shut themselves out of all solid comfort under suffering here, as well as all well-founded hope of happiness hereafter, since the great atonement has been made, and is in the word of the truth of the gospel held out to them as the sure ground of hope for eternity ? The statements in the text, as a source of direction and support and comfort under affliction, can be of no use to the unbelieving sinner. But he has a very deep interest in these statements, forming as they do the very essence of that gospel, those glad tidings of great joy which are to be made known to all nations, "preached to every creature under heaven." "Christ died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring men to God." We proclaim this as the ground of hope to the perishing sinner, as well as the source of comfort to the suffering saint. "He who knew no sin was made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." This is the very truth most sure, "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation." Let the greatest sinner believe this testimony of God concerning his Son, and in the faith of that truth he obtains a saving interest in those penal, vicarious, expiatory sufferings. He obtains "the redemption that is in Christ through his blood, according to the riches" of the divine grace ; he is brought to God. And then he will find that the atoning sufferings and death of the Son of God are not only the price of his justification and the ground of his hope, but that they are to him an exhaustless source of powerful and persuasive motive to all the duties of the Christian life, and of abundant and suitable consolation and support amid all the privations and sufferings, the bereavements and sorrows, the struggles and persecutions, in which he may be involved ; while he is "in a constant continuance in well-doing," doing and suffering the will of God, seeking to be a follower of those

who, through much tribulation, have entered into the kingdom—"who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises;" and seeking especially to tread in the steps of Him who is our pattern as well as our sacrifice, "who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."¹

¹ Heb. xii. 2.

APPENDIX TO DISCOURSE XVI.

PART V.

FACTS IN ANTEDILUVIAN HISTORY REFERRED TO BY THE APOSTLE, AND THEIR BEARING ON HIS OBJECT.

“Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” —1 PET. iii. 20, 21.

THE Jewish Scriptures form an important and valuable portion of the volume of inspired truth. To those who lived previously to the gospel revelation, they contained the only authentic and satisfactory account of the divine character and will in reference to man as a fallen creature; they were their sole trustworthy guide to truth, duty, and happiness. They were accordingly highly valued by the wise and pious under the ancient economy. “The law of thy mouth,” said the Psalmist,—and he expressed the common sentiments and feelings of the body of the faithful,—“The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver;” “More to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, yea, than the honey-comb.”¹ Even to us, to whom “the mystery which had been kept secret from former ages and generations has been made manifest,” the Jewish Scriptures are calculated to answer many important purposes. Though the Mosaic

¹ Ps. cxix. 72, xix. 10.

dispensation "has waxed old and vanished away,"¹ the writings of the prophets have not become obsolete. The pure radiance of apostolical doctrine has not extinguished the dimmer light of ancient history and prophecy. On the contrary, as if borrowing new splendour from the full-risen Sun of righteousness, they cheer us with a brighter and warmer beam than they ever reflected on those who, but for them, must have walked in darkness. In the great edifice of revealed truth, the Old Testament Scriptures are not the scaffolding which, when the building is finished, ceases to be useful, and is removed as an unsightly incumbrance; they are the foundation and lower part of the fabric, forming an important constituent part of "the building of God," and are essentially necessary not only to the beauty, but to the safety, of the superstructure.

It is possible, indeed, to demonstrate the divinity of Christianity and the truth of New Testament doctrine and history on principles which have no direct reference to any former revelation of the divine will; but it is at the same time true, that one of the most satisfactory proofs of these truths is founded on the admission of the divinity of the Jewish sacred books, and consists in the minute harmony of Old Testament prediction with New Testament history and doctrine. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Few exercises are better fitted at once to enlarge the information and strengthen the faith of the Christian than a careful perusal of the Old Testament Scriptures, with a constant reference to Him who is "the end of the law," the substance of all its shadowy ceremonies—to Him of whom "Moses in the law and the prophets did write."

This, however, is by no means the only way in which the Old Testament Scriptures are calculated to minister to

¹ Rom. xvi. 25, 26; Heb. viii. 13.

our improvement. They contain in them an extensive collection of instructions and warnings, counsels and consolations, suited to mankind in every country and age. The man of piety, wherever or whenever he may live, finds in the sacred odes of David at once a fit vehicle for his devotional feelings, and a perfect pattern for his devotional exercises; the maxims of Solomon are found equally suitable for the guidance of our conduct as of that of his contemporaries; and though many of the writings of the prophets bear plain marks of being occasional in their origin and reference, relating to events which, at the time of their publication, excited general interest among the people to whom they were given, yet it is amazing how few passages are not obviously calculated to convey instruction, universal and permanent, fitted to be useful to all men in all time.

Even the historical books of the Old Testament are fitted in a variety of ways to promote the improvement of the Christian, and on this account have strong claims on our attentive study. Like every true history, and indeed in a much higher degree than any other history, they convey to us, in the most engaging form, much information regarding the character and government of God, and respecting the state and dispositions and duty of man. They contain an account of the origin and progress of that system of divine dispensations which found its accomplishment in the redemption of mankind by the death of the incarnate Son of God; an account without which much of the Christian revelation would have been obscure, if not unintelligible. They suggest numerous proofs and illustrations of the characteristic principles of the Christian revelation, and thus at once enable us more fully to understand and more firmly to believe them. The minds of the writers of the New Testament were full of the facts and

imagery of the earlier revelation, and they can be but very imperfectly understood—they are constantly in danger of being misunderstood—by those readers who have not, by carefully studying the Old Testament Scriptures, acquired a somewhat similar familiarity with them.

Of the manner in which the New Testament writers employ their familiarity with the Old Testament for the illustration of the subjects which come before them, we have a striking instance in that portion of the interesting paragraph just read, to which your attention is now about to be more closely directed. The paragraph is a statement of the truth with regard to the sufferings of Jesus Christ, in their nature, design, and consequences, made for the purpose of affording instruction and support to his followers when exposed to suffering in his cause. In the course of this statement the apostle refers to certain facts in antediluvian history, recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures, as having a bearing on the facts respecting Jesus Christ which he states, or on the object for which he states these facts. To ascertain distinctly what are the facts in antediluvian history to which the apostle refers, and to show if possible what is his design in referring to them, what bearing they have on the obvious general purpose of the whole paragraph, are the two objects which I shall endeavour to gain in the remaining portion of these remarks.

The passage which is to form the subject of exposition, though not formally, is plainly substantially parenthetical, and is contained in these words: "The spirits in prison sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh,

but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

I. FACTS IN ANTEDILUVIAN HISTORY REFERRED TO BY
THE APOSTLE.

The first thing we have to do, then, is to bring before your minds the facts in the history of the antediluvian world, to which the apostle here refers. "The spirits in prison sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein a few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water." I have already endeavoured to show, that the most probable interpretation which has been given to the somewhat remarkable phrase, "spirits in prison," is that which considers it as a descriptive appellation of mankind in their fallen state. "Captives" and "prisoners" are figurative expressions, not unfrequently used in Scripture, to denote the condemned state, miserable circumstances, and degraded character of fallen men. Our Lord having obtained, by his atoning death, a mighty accession, in his official character, to his spiritual life and energy, went, and, through the instrumentality of his apostles, preached with remarkable success to those miserable captives, those spirits in prison, vast multitudes of them becoming obedient to his call.

It had not always been so. Communications of the divine will had often been made in former ages to fallen men, without such effects. In particular, in a very remote age, at a period preceding the general deluge, those "spirits in prison," those condemned criminals, those willing captives of Satan and sin—not, indeed, the same individuals to whom our Lord "came and preached," but individuals of the same race, and therefore properly enough designated by

the same name,—had a divine message sent them, and were the subjects of a remarkable manifestation of the divine forbearance: they were almost universally disobedient to this message; and in consequence of their disobedience, they were destroyed in the deluge. A very small minority were obedient, and in consequence of their obedience were saved in the ark, “saved by water.” These are the facts respecting the antediluvians, either explicitly stated or necessarily implied, in the words before us.

We have but detached fragments of the history of mankind during the antediluvian period—a period of nearly seventeen centuries. This we know, however, that at the time which our text refers to, they had, with very few exceptions, become decidedly irreligious and excessively depraved. The language of the sacred historian is very striking: “God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” “The earth was corrupt,” putrid, “before God, and the earth was filled with violence;” and “God looked on the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted his way on the earth.”¹

If men were thus irreligious and corrupt, it was not because they had not the means of being otherwise. If the primitive revelation, through the faith of which Abel obtained salvation, was forgotten, disregarded, or perverted, the fault was with mankind. Besides, God never “left himself without a witness, in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness.” This goodness was calculated, was intended, to bring them to repentance, to change their minds respecting God, whom they had learned to think of as “such an one as themselves.” “The heavens,” before the flood as

¹ Gen. vi. 5, 11, 12.

well as afterwards, "declared the glory of God, and the firmament showed forth his handy-work." "The invisible things of God were from the creation of the world clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead;" so that, when the antediluvians, having the means of knowing God, "glorified him not as God, neither were thankful," but gave themselves up to work wickedness with all greediness, they "were without excuse."¹

Nor was this all. It is reasonable to suppose that, during these seventeen centuries, direct divine communications were made to the fallen race. It is certain that "Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied," warning his contemporaries of the destruction which will ultimately overtake the ungodly, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints," or holy ones, "to execute judgment on all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him."² Thus had God, by his Spirit, striven with men for more than fifteen hundred years. "Sentence against" men's "evil work was not executed speedily," and the "hearts of men were fully set in them to do evil."

Yet was he not "slack concerning his declaration, as some men count slackness." His wrath loses nothing by sleeping. It becomes fresher by repose. "The impenitent abusers of his patience pay interest for all the time of their forbearance, in the increased weight of the judgment when it comes on them." The end of all flesh was now come before God, and he was about to destroy them "with," or from, "the earth."³

¹ Acts xiv. 17 ; Ps. xix. 1, 2 ; Rom. i. 19, 20.

² Jude 14, 15.

³ Gen. vi. 13.

But “surely the Lord God will do nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.” There was but one in that generation to whom that name could be given. “Noah had found grace in the eyes of the Lord;” Noah, “by faith, had become an heir of the justification by faith;” he was “a just man, and perfect in his generation, and walked with God.” This is the good report he has obtained. “THEE,” said Jehovah, that is, *thee* alone, “have I seen righteous before me in this generation.”¹ As he testified his regard to Abraham, by telling him of the approaching overthrow of Sodom; so he showed his peculiar favour to Noah, by announcing to him the coming destruction of his contemporaries. He said, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.”² He shall have an hundred and twenty years of striving with him still. It would seem that Noah was commissioned not only to build the ark, but during its building to announce the approaching deluge, and to call men to repentance. We know that he was “a preacher of righteousness,” and that he not only practically by his conduct, but verbally by his preaching, “condemned the world,”³—told them of their sins, warned them of their danger.

This is the revelation of the divine will referred to in the text; and as the spirit in the prophets was the Spirit of Christ, THE WORD from the beginning being the great revealer of God, and making his revelations by his Spirit, Christ, who went in spirit to the spirits in prison by his apostles, may be considered as having gone to the same class of persons in spirit by his servant Noah. For one hundred and twenty years Noah proclaimed to a doomed world, “Repent;” as Jonah in after ages proclaimed to

¹ Gen. vi. 8; Heb. xi. 7; Gen. vii. 1.

² Gen. vi. 3.

³ 2 Pet. ii. 5; Heb. xi. 7.

the doomed city, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Had Noah's preaching been as successful as Jonah's, we have no reason to doubt but that, as in that case, God "seeing their works, that they turned from their evil way, would have repented of the evil he had said he would do to them, and would not have done it."¹ These hundred and twenty years were years of further, years of peculiar trial; the last opportunity to be afforded to that race for escape from final ruin. They were a period during which "God's long-suffering waited;" that is, God waited in the exercise of long-suffering. It was long-suffering, it was patience, which prevented the immediate infliction of the threatened vengeance; for the iniquities of that generation were full. Come the vengeance when it might, it could not come undeserved. But judgment is his "strange work." They shall have one warning more. He is not willing that they should perish.

And there is something in this warning, especially during the closing period of forbearance, peculiarly striking. "Noah, by faith being instructed of the divine oracle concerning things not yet seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark." When we consider the size of the ark, and the time and labour necessary for collecting the animals which were to be saved in it (for we have no reason to think that their gathering together was entirely miraculous), it is obvious that it must have afforded him employment for a considerable period. It was a striking proof that Noah believed his own denunciation. It was an appeal thus, through the eye as well as through the ear, to that wicked, rebellious generation. But they looked on with a thoughtless eye, as well as listened with a careless ear. They were "disobedient." Noah to the men of his generation, like Lot to his sons-in-law, was "as one who mocked." They believed

¹ Jonah iii. 10.

him not. When they saw the ark building, their sentiments probably found language in such words as these: 'What does the old dotard mean? Where does he intend to sail in this strange hulk? He will find some difficulty to launch it.' And when he told them of the coming ruin at the end of one hundred and twenty years, they were likely to say, 'You look far before you! And shall we perish and you only escape? We will take our chance.'

But God will not be mocked. His established law, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," shall at the appointed time take effect. He is not slack concerning his threatenings any more than his promises, as men count slackness, though he is long-suffering, oh, how long-suffering! Down to the period of the execution of his threatening, these doomed men seem to have been saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? All things continue as they were." "They ate and drank; they married and were given in marriage."

The season of forbearance, long as it was, at last passed away. The ark was finished, and Noah and his family entered into it. "In that same day all the fountains of the great deep," the abyss of subterranean waters, "were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened," to discharge the immense body of water held in solution by the atmosphere. The rains continued without intermission for forty entire days, and the eruption of subterraneous waters for one hundred and fifty days, until at length the inundation came to its height, and covered all the high hills which were under the whole heaven, fifteen cubits upwards above the highest. "And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, both of fowl, and of cattle, and of beast, and of every creeping thing that creepeth on the earth, and every man." All, with the exception of Noah and his family, had been disobedient, and with that exception all perished.

“The waters covered the enemies of God; not one of them was left.”¹

We pronounce no judgment as to the eternal state of all the antediluvians. It is possible that some of them in a right spirit, amid the rising waters of the deluge, sought mercy; and if they did, who dare say, who dare think, that it was refused them? But whether we look on earth or beyond it, without doubt that day was “a day of the perdition of ungodly men.”

While the great body of the spirits in prison in the days of Noah were disobedient, and reaped the fruits of their disobedience, all were not impenitent and unbelieving. Noah was at once believing and obedient. His family were so far obedient, that they availed themselves of the appointed means of deliverance. We have but too good reason to conclude, that, in the best sense of the word, *all* of them were not obedient. They, to the amount of “eight souls,” that is, persons—Noah and his wife, and his three sons and their wives—entered into the ark, and were saved by water. “The Lord said to Noah, Come thou, and all thy house—that is, thy family—into the ark. And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons’ wives with him, into the ark: and the Lord shut them in. And when the waters increased they bare up the ark, and it was lift above the earth; and when the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly on the earth, the ark went on the face of the waters. And God remembered Noah, and those who were in the ark with him.”² After five months floating on a shoreless ocean, it rested on the mountain of Ararat; and after having been tenants of this strange mansion for a year and ten days, they, at the command of God, went forth to take possession of a world already

¹ Gen. vii. 11, 12, 17-24; Ps. cvi. 11.

² Gen. vii. 1, 15, 16, viii. 1, 4.

smiling in vegetable beauty, whose solitudes were soon again to be peopled by the various animal tribes, whose lives had been so strangely preserved amid the general destruction.

These "few, that is, eight souls," are said to have been "saved by water." Various meanings have been attached to these words; some considering them as equivalent to 'saved amid the waters;' others, 'saved notwithstanding the waters;' others, 'saved by being conducted through the waters.' The meaning that the words most naturally suggest seems the true one. They were saved by means of the water. The water which drowned those out of the ark, saved those who were in it. The words of the sacred historian are the best commentary on the apostle's words: "The waters bore up the ark, and it was lift up above the earth, and it went on the face of the waters."¹ As, in consequence of the art of navigation, the ocean, which seemed calculated to separate completely the inhabitants of distant countries, unites them, becoming the great highway of nations; so the waters of the deluge, which were in their own nature fitted to destroy them, by means of the ark saved Noah and his family. Such, then, are the facts of antediluvian history which this passage brings before us.

II. OBJECT OF THE APOSTLE IN REFERRING TO THESE FACTS.

Let us now inquire into the object of the apostle in referring to these facts, and show how they gain that object. It must be acknowledged that the design of the reference is by no means self-evident, or even very readily discernible. It does seem strange, that in the midst of a description of the results of our Lord's penal, vicarious, expiatory suffer-

¹ Gen. vii. 17, 18.

ings, there should be introduced a statement of what took place more than two thousand years before. It is plain, however, to the careful student of the Apostle Peter, that he was accustomed to think of the antediluvian world and the postdiluvian world as of two orders of things which had such strong analogies of resemblance and contrast, as that events in the one naturally suggested to his mind what may be called the corresponding events in the other.

Thus, in the third chapter of his second epistle, he contrasts the two worlds. Of the one he says, "By the word of God, the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished;" and of the other he says, "The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." And in the second chapter of the same epistle we find him saying, "God, who spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly, knoweth" (in this new world) "how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished."¹ Both worlds appeared to him peopled by fallen men doomed to punishment, "spirits in prison;" both privileged with a divine revelation, proclaiming danger, and offering deliverance to those spirits in prison; both destined to be destroyed, as a manifestation of the divine displeasure, the first by a deluge of water, the second by a deluge of fire. Taking this view of the subject, it does not seem strange that the mention of Christ, quickened in the Spirit, going and preaching to the spirits in prison by his apostles, as one result of his atoning sufferings, should have suggested to Peter's mind his having in

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 5-7, ii. 5, 9.

his pre-existent state gone in spirit by the ministry of Noah to the same class of persons in the antediluvian world.

But what is the apostle's object in this reference? His primary object is, if we mistake not, that to which we have already alluded: to illustrate by contrast the blessed effects of our Lord's going and preaching to the spirits in prison, after being quickened in spirit. When in the days of Noah he went and preached to them, "they were disobedient," all but universally disobedient, and "few, that is, eight souls," out, it is probable, of many millions, "were saved;" but now, though many are unbelieving and impenitent, still multitudes both of Jews and Gentiles have become obedient to the faith; and before he finishes his preaching to the spirits in prison, much greater multitudes will yet become obedient. "All the ends of the earth shall remember, and turn to the Lord; and all the kindreds of the people shall worship before him. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor among the nations." "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." And though many shall perish in the deluge of fire, yet still the saved shall not be counted by human numbers. There will be "*nations* of the saved;" and those set free from among the spirits in prison by the word of God, the truth which makes free indeed, shall be "a multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues."¹

A subsidiary yet still an important object in making the reference, seems to have been to bring these truths before the mind: first, that if Christ's preaching, when "quickened by the Spirit" he comes by the apostolic ministry, is disregarded and disobeyed, a more dreadful destruction will befall the unbelieving and impenitent than

¹ Ps. xxii. 27; Rev. xi. 15, xxi. 24, vii. 9.

overwhelmed the antediluvians, who were disobedient to the revelation made by Noah; and secondly, that there is no escape from the destruction to which we are already doomed, but by availing ourselves now, as then, of the only divinely appointed mode of deliverance. "If they who despised" the preaching of Noah, who was a mere man, and who does not seem to have been a worker of miracles, "died without mercy," receiving in the waters of the deluge "a just recompense of reward," "of how much sorer punishment shall they be thought worthy who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and done despite to the Spirit" in whom he comes to them; "neglecting so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken to us by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him; God also bearing witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"¹

There was no mode of escape from the deluge of water but the divinely appointed ark. It is not improbable that in the day of divine visitation various plans were resorted to. Trees were climbed no doubt, mountains ascended, possibly boats of some kind or other taken to;—all in vain. The whole, with the exception of the eight in the ark, were engulfed in the deep and wide-spreading inundation, agitated with fearful tempest from the air, and heaved up into tremendous billows, by internal commotions shaking the earth. And there is no mode of escape for men from the coming fiery deluge which is to destroy the wicked, but in the redemption that is in Christ. "There is no name given under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus." He, and He only, saves from the wrath to come. To those who reject him, "there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful

¹ Heb. ii. 3, 4.

looking for of judgment, to destroy them as the adversaries of God.”¹

It only remains now that we endeavour to ascertain the object of the apostle’s reference in noticing the particular manner in which Noah and his family were saved: they were “saved by water.” The water of the deluge was, as we have already explained it, the means of their deliverance. The apostle himself has, in the 21st verse, informed us what is the point he meant to illustrate by this reference, though it must be acknowledged that it is not very easy to extract a clear and definite explanation from his words: “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

It is rather remarkable that both those who deny the perpetuity of water-baptism as an ordinance, like that denomination of Christians so estimable on many accounts, the Friends, and those who, like the Papists and Puseyites, insist on the necessity and efficiency of water-baptism for salvation, if administered by properly qualified persons, equally seek in this passage for support to their opposite views; the one class insisting that it teaches that the baptism that saves—Christian baptism—is not that which removes external pollution, that it is not the application of water to the body, nor an external rite at all; the other, that it teaches that baptism, which means here just what it means elsewhere—the religious rite known by that name—does save, is necessary, is effectual to salvation. We shall find that the passage, rightly interpreted, gives no support to either of these equally erroneous, though by no means equally dangerous opinions.

It has been doubted whether the apostle meant to com-

¹ Acts iv. 12; Heb. x. 26, etc.

pare baptism with the water of the deluge, or with the ark, or to compare generally the way in which Christians are saved with the way in which Noah and his family were saved; but when the words are carefully examined, there is no room for these doubts. The translation of the words in our version is strictly literal according to the reading adopted, but it is not very intelligible. To the question, What does the expression, "the like figure whereunto even baptism," mean? I can give no answer. The words may be rendered with perfect accuracy, "which was a type or figure of the baptism which saves us;" that is, which water of the deluge is a type or significant resemblance of baptism which saves us; for that it was a type, in the strict sense of the word, as foreshowing dimly to the antediluvians Christian baptism or its meaning, is a notion utterly without support.

It is, however, right to say that there is another reading which, since the manuscripts of the New Testament have been more carefully collated than they had been when our excellent version was made, has been generally preferred by the most learned and judicious scholars, and which gives this rendering:¹ "which," referring to water, "which also saves us, baptism which corresponds to, or is figuratively represented by, the water of the deluge." It is as if the apostle had said, 'Water saved the family of Noah, and it may be said water also saves us; I refer to baptism, which in this respect resembles the waters of the deluge, both being connected by divine appointment with salvation or deliverance.'

How the water of the deluge was connected with the salvation of Noah's family we have already seen; how baptism is connected with our salvation we are now to inquire;

¹ The Textus Receptus gives ω ; Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann, etc., give γ .

and the apostle has answered the question both negatively and positively. But before entering on the consideration of his answer, it deserves remark, that the very comparison shows that baptism has but an indirect influence on our salvation; an influence which is emblemized not by the ark, but by the water, which in itself was rather fitted to destroy than to save.

Let us now hear the apostle. He first tells us how baptism does not save: it does not save us, as it is a "putting away of the filth of the flesh." That is the physical effect of the application of water to the body. It removes whatever soils the body, and produces cleanliness; this is all it can do as an external application. This does not, this cannot, save us. The idea that the external rite of baptism can save, can communicate spiritual life, can justify and regenerate, is equally absurd, unscriptural, and mischievous. Moral effects must have moral causes. It has been justly said, "Even the life of a plant, or an animal, far more the life of thought, taste, affection, and conscience, cannot be produced by the use of mere lifeless matter. He who should assert this would be considered as little better than a madman; but is not the statement still more irrational and unintelligible, that the life of the soul, by which it is united to God and secured of salvation, is produced by sprinkling or pouring water on an individual, or by immersing him in it?" A man must be "given up to strong delusions," before he can "believe a lie" like this.

The positive part of the apostle's answer is, however, the most important part of it. Baptism saves us, as it is "the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Before entering on the exposition of this statement, which is encumbered with some verbal difficulties, it will, I am persuaded, serve a good purpose to state in the fewest words, to whom, and to what, in the New

Testament, salvation is attributed. God is said to save us. "All things are of him," in the new creation. He "is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."¹ We are said to be saved "by grace," by "God's grace."² Christ is said to save us. "All things" in the new creation "are by Him." One of his most common names is "our Saviour." The blood of Christ is said to save us: "Redemption is through his blood." The resurrection of Christ is said to save us: "We are saved by his life."³ The Holy Spirit is said to save us: "We are saved by the renewing of the Holy Ghost."⁴ The gospel is said to save men. The words which Peter was to speak to Cornelius, were words which were to "save him and his family." We are said to be saved by faith: "By grace are ye saved, through faith." "Thy faith," said our Lord, on a number of occasions, "has saved thee." "He that believeth shall be saved."⁵ Men are said to be saved by confession of the truth in connection with faith: "With the heart man believes to righteousness," that is, justification; "and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."⁶ Men are said to be saved by baptism in connection with faith: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;"⁷ and here "baptism saves us."

Now these statements are all perfectly consistent with each other; and he only understands how sinful men are saved, who sees the meaning and apprehends the consistency of these statements. Here they are in one sentence: God, in the exercise of sovereign grace, saves men through the mediation of his Son, who died as an atoning victim, and rose again to the possession of all power in heaven and earth, that he might save all coming to the Father by him—

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 10.² Eph. ii. 4, 5.³ Eph. i. 7; Rom. v. 10.⁴ Tit. iii. 5.⁵ Eph. ii. 8; Luke vii. 50, xviii. 42; Mark xvi. 16.⁶ Rom. x. 10.⁷ Mark xvi. 16.

all who, being led by the operation of the Holy Spirit to believe the gospel of salvation, become personally interested in the blessings procured through the mediation of the Son; and wherever men are made really to believe the gospel, they, as the natural result of that faith, and in obedience to the divine command, make a profession of that faith; and in the case of those who in mature life are brought from a false religion to the knowledge and belief of the gospel, the commencement of this profession is baptism, or "the being washed with pure water."

If this statement is understood, there is little difficulty in answering the question, How does baptism save? It is an emblematical representation of what saves us,—the expiatory, justifying blood of Christ; the regenerating, sanctifying influence of the Spirit; and a corresponding confession of the truth thus represented.

Let us look at the apostle's answer, and see if it be not substantially the same as that to which we have been led. I stated to you that there were verbal difficulties. The principal of these are two: the first referring to the meaning of the word rendered "answer;" and the other referring to the connection of the concluding clause, "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." The word rendered "answer"¹ occurs nowhere else, either in the New Testament or in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. From its etymology, and its use in classic writers, we should say its meaning is "question," not "answer." Many interpreters suppose that there is a reference to an ancient custom of making the baptismal profession in reply to questions put by the administrator, but we have no evidence that this practice existed in the apostle's time; and though it had, the fact would not account for a word meaning "question" being used to signify "answer." Others have rendered it

¹ Ἐπιρώτημα.

“inquiry,” “application to,”—the application of a good conscience to God for salvation, the sincerely seeking salvation from God. I am persuaded that the word is here employed, as a word of very nearly the same meaning is occasionally in Greek writers, who use a similar dialect with the apostle,—as equivalent to expression, confession, or declaration.¹

Some interpreters connect the concluding clause with the word *save*—“baptism saves us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ;” others with the phrase, “good conscience towards God;” others with the whole expression, “answer of a good conscience towards God.” The second appears to me the most natural mode of connection. What the apostle’s words bring before the mind is this: A man has a good conscience; he has obtained this good conscience by the resurrection of Christ; he makes a declaration of this good conscience in his baptism; and it is in this way that the apostle declares that baptism saves.²

I had an opportunity some time ago of explaining to you, at some length, what it is to have a good conscience towards God. I stated that a good conscience is just a right and happy state of thought and feeling in reference to our relations and duties to God—confidence in God, love to God; and I showed you that this is obtained by the man’s conscience being sprinkled with the atoning blood of Jesus, or, in other words, by his experiencing the power of Christ’s atoning blood to pacify the conscience and purify the heart, through the faith of the truth respecting it; and by his being transformed through “the renewing of the mind,” produced by “the Holy Ghost shed forth abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.”

This good conscience is said to be “by the resurrection

¹ See note F.

² “Anima enim non lavatione, sed responsione sancitur.”—**TERTUL-
LIAN**, *De Resurrectione Carnis* xlviii.

of Jesus Christ.”¹ The resurrection of Christ is the grand proof of the divinity of his mission, and the truth of his doctrine, especially respecting the efficacy of his atoning sacrifice. It is truth regarding these, apprehended in its meaning and evidence under the influence of the Holy Spirit, which produces the good conscience towards God. “I trust in God, seeing he has brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus. I love him who gave his Son for my offences, and who raised him again for my justification.”

Of this good conscience, of a mind at peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, a heart with the love of God shed abroad in it, the converted Jew or pagan made a profession when, in obedience to the command of Christ, he submitted to baptism. Thus confessing by an external act what he believed in his heart, that God had raised Christ from the dead, he was saved. In this way, in this way alone, can it be said that “baptism saves us.”²

Much ingenuity has been discovered in attempting to trace the analogy between the waters of the deluge saving Noah’s family, and the water of baptism saving those who in it make an enlightened profession of “a good conscience towards God, through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.” I apprehend we are not to seek anything more than that general analogy which we have already illustrated.

¹ By marking the words “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,” as a parenthesis, our translators have disjoined the phrase “by the resurrection of the dead” from “the answer of a good conscience,” and connected it with “baptism saves us.” Tregelles very justly says that we would find it difficult to read such a passage *aloud* in English, rightly connecting the words. But there are more serious objections to this notation. *Such a parenthesis is, to say the least, of very rare occurrence ; and while it is quite easy to give a clear meaning to the propositions taken singly, ‘baptism saves,’ and ‘the resurrection of Christ saves,’ it is difficult to say how baptism saves by the resurrection of Christ.*

² See note G.

The following illustration is at any rate ingenious, and the sentiment it conveys indubitably true and awfully important. "The flood of waters displayed the divine indignation, and executed the threatened vengeance against the wickedness of an ungodly world, while they yet bore up in safety the eight persons enclosed in the ark; so the blood of Christ shed for sin, emblematically represented in baptism, while it has effected the eternal redemption and salvation of all in him, the remnant, according to the election of grace, is at the same time the most awful manifestation of the righteous judgment of God, as well as the surest pledge of its execution against the world which lieth under the wicked one."¹ I have thus concluded my illustrations of this interesting and somewhat difficult passage.

Though I do not think we have been able to clear the difficult passage we have been considering of all its obscurity, I think we have succeeded to a considerable extent; and I am sure we have made it plain enough, that what Paul says of all Scripture given by divine inspiration, is true of this. It is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." I have left myself little time to show you the practical use we should make of it. I shall only notice one very important practical conclusion to which it very directly leads us—the folly and danger of trusting in the mere external rite of baptism, or in anything that is external. Happily *we* are not taught the soul-deluding doctrine of the intrinsic efficacy of the sacraments, as they are called, and of baptismal regeneration as a part of that general dogma. On the contrary, we are taught that "the sacraments become effectual to salvation, not from any virtue in themselves, or in those who administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in those who by faith receive

¹ John Walker : *Essays and Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 107.

them ;” and that no baptism saves, except that which is connected with “engrafting into Christ, and partaking of the covenant of grace, and is an engagement to be the Lord’s.”¹

But though we are thus taught, and I believe few of us would call this teaching in question, yet there is a natural tendency in the human mind to rest on what is external. Let us beware, then, of supposing that we are safe because we have been baptized, whether in infancy or on our personal profession of faith. The apostle’s doctrine respecting circumcision and Judaism is equally true of baptism and Christianity. He is not a true Christian who is one outwardly ; neither is that saving baptism which consists merely in the application of water to the body. He is a Christian who is one inwardly, who has the good conscience towards God ; and saving baptism is the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Let all remember, that if they would be saved, enter into the kingdom of God, they “must be born again,” “born not of water only, but of the Spirit.”² And let all who have made profession of a good conscience remember, that where there is a good conscience there will be a good conversation ; and that if “a man be in Christ a new creature,” he will “put off the old man, who is corrupt in his deeds, and put on the new man, who, after Christ Jesus, is renewed in knowledge and in true holiness.” Professing to be saved from the fiery deluge which is coming on the unbelieving, disobedient world, by the blood of Christ represented in baptism, he will show that, by the same precious blood, he is delivered from that world’s power, redeemed from “the vain conversation received by tradition from his fathers.” Freed from spiritual captivity, he will walk at liberty ; and brought into a new world, all old things will pass away, and “all things become new.”

¹ *Westminster Shorter Catechism.*

² John iii. 1-8.

I cannot persuade myself to close this discourse without dropping a word or two of warning to those "spirits in prison," of whom there are so many in our world, of whom I am afraid there may be some in this assembly, who, though the great Emancipator is present preaching peace and liberty, are yet disobedient, clinging to their chains, and refusing to come forth from their prison-house. I beseech them to consider that the long-suffering of God will not always wait for them, and that the deluge of fire will as certainly come as the deluge of water has come.

Oh, think what must be the issue of this course of yours. "Is it a light matter to you to die in your sins, and to have the wrath of God for ever abiding on you? Think you that it is a light matter to have refused Christ so often, and that after you have been so often requested to receive salvation, after the Lord has followed you with entreaties, hath called so often, 'Why will ye die?' yet wilfully to perish? Would you willingly die in this state? Oh! think, then, he is yet speaking peace; yet waiting, if at length you will return. This is one day more of his waiting and of his speaking to you here; but it may be the last day. For you the flood of fire may come to-morrow. You may die to-night; and as death leaves you, judgment will find you. Oh that ye were wise, and would consider your latter end! Why wear out the day of grace, as careless about Christ, as uncertain about salvation as ever? As you love your souls, be serious in this matter. This was the undoing of the spirits in prison in the days of Noah. They were all for present things; they ate and drank, married and were given in marriage; they were exclusively occupied with things seen and temporal, drowned in them, and that drowned them in a flood. Noah ate and drank too; but his main work was the preparation of the ark. The necessities of life the children of God are tied to. They must

give some time and attention to them; but the thing that takes up their hearts, that which the bent of their souls is set on, is an interest in Jesus Christ. All your wise designs are but pleasing madness till this becomes your chief concern also. Others have had your privileges, and abused them; they might have obeyed the gospel, and obtained salvation; but they were disobedient, and are lost, lost for ever. And all they set their heart on has passed away as a shadow; they have nothing of it but the bitter reflection that they sold their souls for a thing of nought.”¹

Will you follow them? You must to the grave, and that soon; but will you follow them to hell? Stop! Consider! Believe, obey the gospel. Now, now is the accepted time. He who listens to this call shall find, amidst the overflowing flood of divine vengeance, in the blessed GOD-MAN, “a hiding-place from the storm, a covert from the tempest,” and “shall be safe in that day of evil.”

NOTE A. p. 399.

From the Talmudical writers, it appears that the dead body was not hung by the neck, but by the hands; and that it was hung, not on “a tree” properly called, but ἐπὶ ξύλου, on a piece of timber or stake.—*Mischna*, c. vi.; *Gem. Babyl. Sanhed.* c. vi. fol. 45, col. 2; edit. Amstel. The manner of hanging is thus described by one of these writers: “They fix a stake in the earth, and out of that stake comes a piece of timber; and both the hands placed together are tied, and by them the executioner hangs the body up.”—THEOD. DASSOVIUS, *Dissertatio de suspendio hominis lapidibus obruti*, ad Gal. iii. 13; Deut. xxi. 22.

NOTE B. p. 418.

In bringing about the change referred to, the chief agent employed by Providence has been the Rev. ADAM THOMSON, D.D.,

¹ Leighton.

of Coldstream. Few men have been honoured in a higher degree than this public-spirited minister of Christ. Through his instrumentality, that word of God, which its Author glorifies above all his name,—that word which is able to make men wise unto salvation—which was to a certain extent in this country “bound,”—now runs, has free course, and is glorified. May nothing henceforth stop its course !

NOTE C. p. 453.

These are well weighed words of the candid and learned Joachim Camerarius, a man every way worthy of being Melancthon's friend : “ Est hic unus ex iis locis sacrarum literarum, de quibus pietas religiosa quærere amplius et dubitare quid dicatur, sine reprehensione : et de quibus diversæ etiam sententiæ admitti posse videantur, dummodo non detorqueatur καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ φρονεῖν, id est, religiosa de fide consensio, neque aberretur, ἀπὸ τῆς ἀναλογίας τῆς πίστεως.” Luther's remarks, characteristic as they are, do not merit the same eulogium : “ Hac tam horribili pœna Petrus Apostolus quoque motus videtur, ut non aliter quam fanaticus loquatur talia verba, quæ ne hodie quidem, a nobis intelligi possunt.”—1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. “ Mirabile profecto iudicium, et vox pæne fanatica.”—LUTH. : *Exeg. Opp. Latt.*, tom. ii. p. 221. I do not know that we can make any better apology for the rashness of the great reformer, than to confess with Langé, the worthy father-in-law of the learned and judicious Rambach, “ virum optimum aliquid humani passum esse ;” and that what he says, “ ex affectu potius, quam verbis æstimandum esse.”

NOTE D. p. 454.

Wiclif is uniform in his rendering “ made dede *in* fleisch, but made quyk *in* spirit ; he cam *in* spirit,” etc. So is Tyndale, so far as the repeated mention of spirit is concerned : “ Was kyllled as pertayning to the flesshe ; but was quykened *in* the sprete, *in* which sprete he also went,” etc. Cranmer repeats Tyndale, as does the Genevan, with some slight orthographical changes. The Rhemists, in the first part of the rendering, are nearer the truth than any of them : “ *Mortified* certes *in* flesh, but quickened *in* spirit ; *in* the which spirit,” etc.

NOTE E. p. 456.

A pretty full account of the diversified opinions referred to in this and the following paragraph, is to be found in the third excursus appended to the second fasciculus of Pott's *Commentary on the Catholic Epistles*, forming the ninth volume of the "Editio Koppiana" of the Greek New Testament. It is entitled, "Variæ interpretum, de descensu Jesu Christi ad inferos, sententiæ secundum temporum ordinem enumerantur, et breviter dijudicantur: nostraque interpretatio, copiosius explicatur." Bishop Horsley belongs to the more reasonable portion of this class. His defence of his view of the passage, like everything he did, bears the mark of power, both imaginative and ratiocinative; but, like many things he did, it is lamentably deficient in sober thinking and conclusive argument. It is a happy thing that Priestley had other confuters, and the divinity of Christ other defenders, than the Bishop of Rochester.

"Christus dum in terris vixit paucos Judæos convertit: at post mortem et resurrectionem suam, per spiritum profectus prædicavit spiritibus qui erant in carcere, 1 Pet. iii. 19; id est gentibus quæ sedebant in umbra mortis constrictæ compedibus, atque catenis tenebrarum et ignorantiae, easque imperio ac regimini suo subjecit."—WOLZOGENIUS, *Com. in Evang. Joan.* ch. xiv. 12. *Bib. Pol. Frat.* tom. viii. p. 963.

"Quæstio quam mihi proposuisti ex Epistola Apostoli Petri solet nos, ut te latere non arbitror, vehementissime commovere, quomodo illa verba accipienda sint, tanquam de inferis dicta. Replico ergo tibi eandem quæstionem, ut sive ipse potueris, sive aliquem qui possit inveneris, auferas de illa atque finias dubitationem meam. . . . Multa millia hominum qui Deum ignorantes, et dæmonum vel simulacrorum cultui dediti a temporibus Noe usque ad passionem Christi, ex hac vita emigrarunt, quos apud inferos Christus inveniens, quomodo illis non prædicavit sed illis tantum qui in diebus Noe increduli fuerunt, cum fabricaretur arca? Aut si omnibus prædicavit, cur illos solos Petrus commemoravit, prætermissa multitudo tam innumerabili cæterorum? . . . Quinam isti (spiritus in carcere) sint temerarium est definire. . . . Cur Petrus eos tantum commemorare voluerit quibus in carcere inclusis evangelium prædicatum est, qui in

diebus Noe cum fabricaretur arca increduli fuerunt, vides quam latebrosum sit—et quæ me moveant ne affirmare hinc aliquid audeam. His dictis subnectit, ‘Propter hoc enim et mortuis Evangelizatum est,’ etc. Quem non moveat ista profunditas? . . . Considera tamen ne forte totum illud quod de conclusis in carcere spiritibus qui in diebus Noe non crediderant, Petrus Apostolus dicit, omnino ad inferos non pertineat; sed ad illa potius tempora quorum formam ad hæc tempora transtulit. Illa quippe res gesta forma fuerat futurorum, ut ii qui modo non credunt Evangelio, dum in omnibus gentibus ædificatur ecclesia, illis intelligantur esse similes qui tunc non crediderunt cum fabricaretur arca. Illi autem qui crediderunt et per baptismum salvi fiunt, illis comparentur qui tunc in eadem arca salvi facti sunt per aquam. . . . Fieri potest ut mortuos dixerit infideles, hoc est, in anima mortuos. . . . Proinde etiam quod sequitur ‘propter hoc et mortuis Evangelizatum est, ut judicentur quidem secundum homines in carne, vivant autem secundum Deum spiritu’ non cogit apud inferos intelligi. ‘Propter hoc enim’ in hac vita ‘et mortuis, Evangelizatum est,’ id est, infidelibus et iniquis, ut cum crediderint ‘judicentur quidem secundum homines in carne;’ hoc est in diversis tribulationibus et in ipsa morte carnis. . . . Hæc expositio verborum Petri cui displicet, vel cui etiamsi non displicet, non tamen sufficit, quærat ea secundum inferos intelligere: qui si valuerit illa quibus me moveri supra commemoravi, ita solvere ut eorum auferat dubitationem, impertiat et mihi.”—AUGUSTINI, *Epistolæ*. Ep. xcix. pp. 500–511. 8vo, Lugd. 1561.

The article in τῷ πνεύματι, ch. iii. 18, according to the textus receptus, is rejected from the text by Wetstein, Griesbach, Matthæi, Scholz, and Lachmann. Bishop Middleton considers the true rendering of θανατωθεὶς σαρκί, ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι, as “dead carnally, but alive spiritually.”—*Doctrine of the Greek Article*, p. 618.

NOTE F. p. 518.

Beausobre’s note is worth quoting. “Ἐπερώρημα, ‘L’Ame,’ dit Tertullian, ‘n’est sanctifiée par le lavement, mais par la confession.’—‘Anima enim non lavatione sed responsione sancitur’ pro sanctificatur. Je soupçonne que Tertullien a bien reconté. En effect, on trouve ce mot (Ἐπερώρημα) dans cette signification.

Καὶ ὁ νόμος αὐτῷ πίστος ὡς ἐρώτημα δηλῶν. Ecclus. xxxiii. 8.
 'La loi de Dieu sera pour un homme qui le craint, aussi fidèle que la reponse de l'Oracle.' "

The opinion of the learned and judicious Winer deserves also to be cited: "Ἐπερώτησιν can signify *stipulari*, but *ἐπερωτᾶσθαι* is necessarily *promittere*, as also the glossaries teach. The answer to the question proposed (formally or implicitly) would be here the principal subject. Ἐπερώτημα, derived from the active voice, would here be altogether without meaning. The proposed question was not that which brings felicity: it must be taken passively, and be derived from *ἐπερωτᾶσθαι*, *promittere*. More simply, and in accordance with biblical usage, we may translate σ. α. ς. σ. Θ. the inquiry of a good conscience after God: comp. 2 Sam. xi. 7." This more simple mode of exegesis does not commend itself to my mind. Neander, after stating that the confession of faith made by catechumens at baptism was in answer to distinct questions, remarks in a note, "According to the most natural interpretation, 1 Pet. iii. 21 has reference to the question proposed at baptism,—Ἐπερώτημα, metonymice, for the pledge in answer to the question."—*Gen. Ch. Hist.* vol. i. p. 421.

NOTE G. p. 519.

From this declaration the conclusion has been drawn, that none are fit subjects of baptism but such as have "the good conscience," and can give the corresponding "answer" or profession. The conclusion, though plausible, is not warranted. The Apostle Paul states, that 'the true circumcision before God is not the outward circumcision of the flesh, but the inward circumcision of the heart and spirit.'—Rom. ii. 29. But it would be a false conclusion, 'Therefore Jewish infants, who are not capable of that spiritual circumcision, or of the profession of it, ought not to be circumcised.' The fair conclusion from Paul's statement is: No uncircumcised adult should be admitted to circumcision who does not seem to have the circumcision of the heart. The fair conclusion from Peter's is: No unbaptized adult should be admitted to baptism without seeming to have the good conscience, and making profession of it. Whether any infants, and if any, what infants may be baptized, is a question

which must be determined by its own evidence. We know that the infants of Jews were the proper subjects of circumcision, notwithstanding the declaration in Rom. ii. 29 ; and the infants of Christians *may* be proper subjects of baptism, notwithstanding the declaration made here. Whether they are so, is a question on which good men are divided ; and everything is a step towards their agreement, which distinctly marks what has, and what has not, a bearing on its determination. If the irrelevant arguments on both sides were put aside, the satisfactory decision of this question, which has causelessly divided the Church of Christ, and produced a great deal of unchristian feeling, would be greatly facilitated.

END OF VOL. II.



